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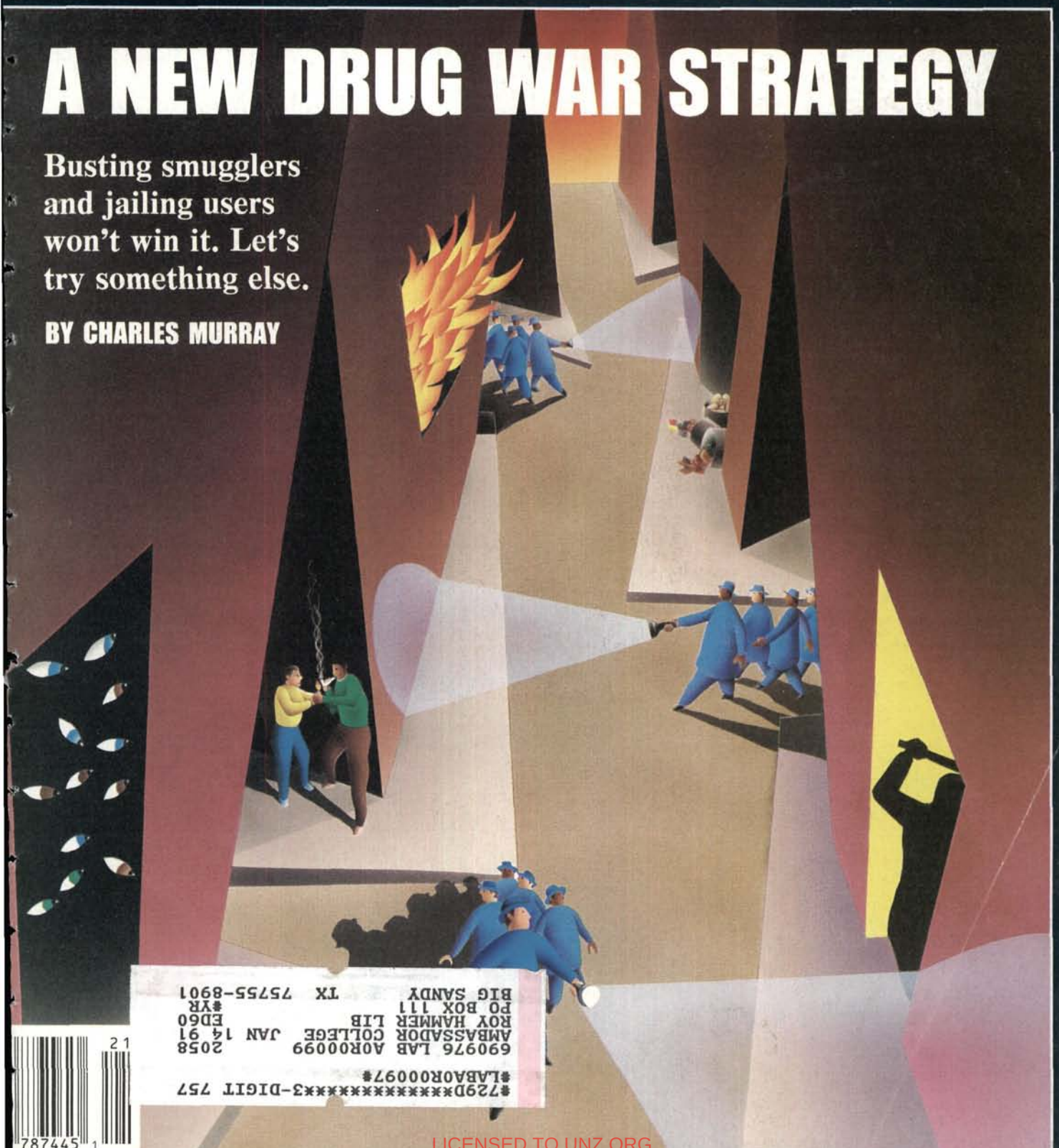
BY CHARLES MURRAY



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Cover by Michael McGurl for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 19.

4 MICHAEL KINSLEY **TRB: SOUR MILKEN** The case against the case against the case against the junk bond king.

6 CORRESPONDENCE Kissinger's geopolitics, Kinsley's capitalism, &c.

7 THE EDITORS **DOWN WITH THE COUNT** Let's discard the census, a relic of a simpler time. **FOR WHOM BELL TOLLS** Racial demands and supply at Harvard Law School. **NOTEBOOK** Candidate blood testing, Japanese appliance bashing, &c.

9 FRED BARNES **WHITE HOUSE WATCH: LAYING OFF** President Bush always likes to give fellow world leaders the benefit of the doubt. Now it's Kaifu's turn.

11 DANIEL GROSS **SEED MONEY** Bush's plan to plant a billion trees seems a bit hollow.

12 JAMES S. HENRY **SHOCK TREATMENT** Brazil's new president has prescribed a radical solution for the country's foundering economy. So far, it seems to be working.

14 ARTURO CRUZ JR. AND CONSUELO CRUZ SEQUEIRA **CRISIS OF THE CLANS** As Nicaragua's ideological conflict fades, old patterns of family politics re-emerge.

16 EDWARD NORDEN **GRIDLOX** If you're losing patience with the eternal Israeli logjam between Labor and Likud, don't worry. You're not the only one.

19 CHARLES MURRAY **HOW TO WIN THE WAR ON DRUGS** Locking up another million or so citizens isn't the way. As an alternative, we should make drug-free schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods an option for all those who prefer them.

26 STANLEY KAUFFMANN **ON FILMS: UNCIVIL WARS** Sidney Lumet's sharp *Q&A*.

28 ROBERT BRUSTEIN **ON THEATER: THE LESSON OF 'THE PIANO LESSON'** August Wilson's ongoing epic about the legacy of racism succumbs to a vision of victimization.

30 ROBERT B. REICH **THE COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATIVE** *Charity Begins at Home* by Teresa Odendahl; *Partners in the Public Service* by Lester M. Salamon, J. C. Musselwhite Jr., C. J. De Vita

32 TZVETAN TODOROV **POSTMODERNISM, A PRIMER** *Postmodernist Culture* by Steven Connor; *A Poetics of Postmodernism* by Linda Hutcheon; *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* by Stephen Toulmin

35 RICHARD H. POPKIN **NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND** *Spinoza and Other Heretics: Vol. I: The Marrano of Reason; Vol. II: The Adventures of Immanence* by Yirmiyahu Yovel; *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* by Yosef Kaplan; *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* by Benedict Spinoza, translated by Samuel Shirley

36 JONATHAN AARON **POEM** *The Last of the Medici*

42 HENDRIK HERTZBERG **WASHINGTON DIARIST: NEOCONFAB** Perestroika politbabble.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Sour Milken

"But . . . it came to be said of him that he had been more sinned against than sinning; and that, but for the jealousy of the old stagers in the mercantile world, he would have done very wonderful things."

Those words dispatch the great crooked financier Augustus Melmotte, whose rise and fall is the focus of Trollope's 1874 novel, *The Way We Live Now*. The same is being said about the greatest real-life crooked financier of our own day, Michael Milken: that he was a brilliant innovator done in by the envy of lesser mortals and older money. The most hysterical (in both senses) reaction to Milken's guilty plea came from Evans and Novak: "His surrender suggests that in its judicial handling of individuals, the United States is running counter to the worldwide trend toward freedom."

Yet one of Milken's most ardent defenders in the past, newspaper magnate Ralph Ingersoll II, has turned oddly silent. When Milken was indicted last year, Ingersoll praised him as a hero on "Nightline" and said the prosecution was "as revolting as . . . the McCarthy hearings." Ingersoll and others signed a newspaper ad headlined "Mike Milken, We Believe in You": "Mike cares about people. . . . Mike has always performed according to the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, integrity and ethical conduct."

"Mike" helped Ingersoll to raise $500 million in junk bonds (or, if you prefer, "high-yield, fixed-return securities"), which he used to buy up newspaper companies, often at startlingly high prices. Now the revenues from the newspapers don't begin to cover the interest payments, and Ingersoll is sleazily offering to buy back his debts for as little as twenty-eight cents on the dollar. William Farley, another former loudmouth about the virtues of risk, debt, and Michael Milken, has defaulted on $1.5 billion of bonds he used to overpay for companies.

The case against the case against Michael Milken has three parts. One, his crimes were "technical," not serious. Two, they were a minor sideshow, unrelated to his real work, which was the creation of the junk bond market. Three, Milken's junk bonds served America by enabling small, risky companies to raise capital and create jobs; and by financing the takeover movement that forced big corporations to become more efficient.

The word "technical" can mean two different things here (as noted by Professor Ronald Gilson of Stanford Law School). Most of the crimes Milken pled guilty to are arguably "technical" in the sense that they were violations of rules designed to assure an orderly and fair financial marketplace. These rules, by their nature, are somewhat arbitrary, and the behavior they outlaw might not otherwise seem obviously immoral. But the laws Milken has admitted breaking are not "technical" in the sense that they were broken unintentionally, by stepping slightly over a fuzzy line. He knew he was breaking important laws. And in a couple of cases—helping an associate to arrange a phony tax loss, and "point shaving" (essentially, ripping off customers by tiny fractions that add up to big money)—the inherent rights and wrongs are not even ambiguous.

But these crimes are just what Milken pleaded guilty to. At the same time, he also settled a civil suit by the Securities and Exchange Commission. That civil suit accused him of a potpourri of classic financial frauds, from straightforward insider trading (profiting from secret knowledge of deals he was involved in) to payola (bribing money managers to buy his securities for their clients) to falsifying and destroying records. In settling—and agreeing to pay $400 million to his victims—Milken does not concede guilt. But he may not assert his innocence, either. We will know next fall, when the government produces its memorandum for Milken's sentencing, what evidence it had on these other matters. Milken's defenders say he was bullied into a guilty plea by the unfair threat of prosecution under the racketeering (RICO) law. I bet that when we see the goods, Milken's jail term and $600 million fine will look like a good deal for him.

So why did he do it, when he was making hundreds of millions of dollars legally? The answer, I think, is that the manipulative shenanigans were not just a sideshow. The exchange of favors—buy this troubled bond for me, and I'll buy a bond or do something else for you—was part of his modus operandi. It's just that many of the favors were illegal. Those who wish to blame the government's removal of Milken for the collapse of the junk bond market are not completely wrong. It required a master juggler to keep all those balls in the air.

Thus to question three: How wonderful were junk bonds? Only about half went to finance those little entrepreneurial companies that were deemed too risky to float a traditional bond. And even much of this money was spent, as Ingersoll spent most of his, buying established operations rather than creating new ones.

Although the bondholders were paid high interest to compensate them for the extra risk, it's clear in retrospect (and not very long retrospect: reality has struck within a year) that the risk was often wildly underestimated. Sometimes, as in the case of the savings and loans that bought 7 percent of junk bonds, buyers were numb to the risk because they were essentially protected from it by federal deposit insurance. Sometimes Milken's own juggling kept buyers buying despite the risk. Mostly, though, it was just the willing suspension of disbelief.

Whatever the reason, it was too easy. Many of those spunky little companies that couldn't get financing in the bad old days shouldn't have gotten financing after all. Today the average junk bond trades at about 75 percent of its face value, reflecting an assumption that it has a one in four chance of going bust. No one figured on that.

About half of all junk bonds financed takeovers of larger companies or restructurings to ward off takeovers. By replacing equity with debt (borrowing money to buy shares), they turned companies that weren't inherently risky into companies that were. Companies like Southland (7-11 stores), J.P. Stevens, and maybe even Milken's Drexel Burnham Lambert itself wouldn't have gotten into trouble if they didn't have huge interest payments to pay (instead of optional dividends).

Did the takeover movement make corporate America more efficient? This was always a bolder claim than many of its proponents realized. If the huge premiums that takeover artists offered for company shares reflected genuine improvements they could make in corporate management, this is a devastating indictment of American capitalism. Widespread public share ownership, a professional management class, the stock market—pillars of our economic system—topple under the weight of this argument, if true.

It *is* true, to some extent. But as takeover frenzy spread, speculative fever and too-easy access to financing became better explanations of the prices being offered. Milken's contribution was to greatly increase the proportion of unproductive paper shuffling in the takeover boom. It's an old story. "There was not one of them," Trollope writes of Melmotte's business colleagues "who had not . . . been given to understand that his fortune was to be made, not by the construction of the railway but by the floating of the railway shares."

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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CORRESPONDENCE

China men

To the editors:

In his cover story "Bullish on Beijing" (April 9), Arthur Waldron demonstrated the danger of an area specialist who becomes so narrowly focused that he misses the big picture. Waldron's assertion that the rapprochement between China and the United States was originally motivated by the three convictions of the "New China" position is unequivocally wrong. Kissinger was a strategist, not a romanticist; what he hoped for was a dramatic change in international relations favorable to the United States.

The key to this change was the increasing Sino-Soviet hostility at the end of the 1960s, something Waldron inexcusably failed to take note of. His only comment was that China was "perhaps suspicious of the USSR. . .," a drastic understatement. Nixon and Kissinger understood the potential opportunity that the Sino-Soviet split held for the United States. They also understood that this split could not be affected by the United States; China had to realize on its own the need for an American counterweight to the USSR. A number of factors explain the Sino-Soviet split, but two most likely pushed the Chinese to seek a triangular relationship in 1969. One was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, since the Chinese probably feared that the Brezhnev doctrine applied equally as well to them as to Eastern Europe. The other was the border clash between the two Communist powers throughout 1969.

Geopolitics was Kissinger's guiding principle. A decreased Chinese threat in Asia; an end to the Vietnam War; a shift of Soviet military concern away from Europe toward its border with China: these goals, which seemed more attainable with a triangular relationship, were the explanation for Kissinger's excitement over Nixon's visit to China, not a sentimental conviction learned from the academic left.

ROBERT SOMERVILLE
Alexandria, Virginia

Plane truths

To the editors:

In "Remote Control" (TRB, April 23), Michael Kinsley writes: "Deregulation in general—of airlines, for example—has been a great success of free market economics. But cable deregulation suffers from a laughable flaw: cable systems aren't a free market."

Fly out of a hub dominated by one airline. On tickets bought from a travel agency wed to the airline. For twice the time-discounted price, because the trip is an emergency. With less knee room than a ten-year-old deserves. And, in some states, after driving twice the distance between Philadelphia and Washington to reach a major carrier. A success of free market economics? For the few remaining airlines, maybe. We don't know yet.

For the rest of his life Kinsley will help to pay for the deregulation of the S&Ls. For much of the nation, the success story also includes the dismantling of rail branch lines and resulting pulverization of highways; the non-emergence of high-speed transit; 800 numbers in place of personal presence in the service industries; the priority of consumables over the means to save energy and resources.

Debt is deferred to another generation. Infrastructure built by past generations rusts and rots. Assuming no reversal of the mindset now hardening at the center of power and no restoration of institutional memory among the apparatchiks of the financial community, the unenlightened regions, ungrateful to the double-speak philosophy that neither freed the marketplace nor reduced federal intervention, will someday proclaim their autonomy from the equivalent of White Russia—seeking moral support from Europe and Japan.

PERRY SWISHER
Boise, Idaho

The writer is commissioner of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission.

Pet peeve

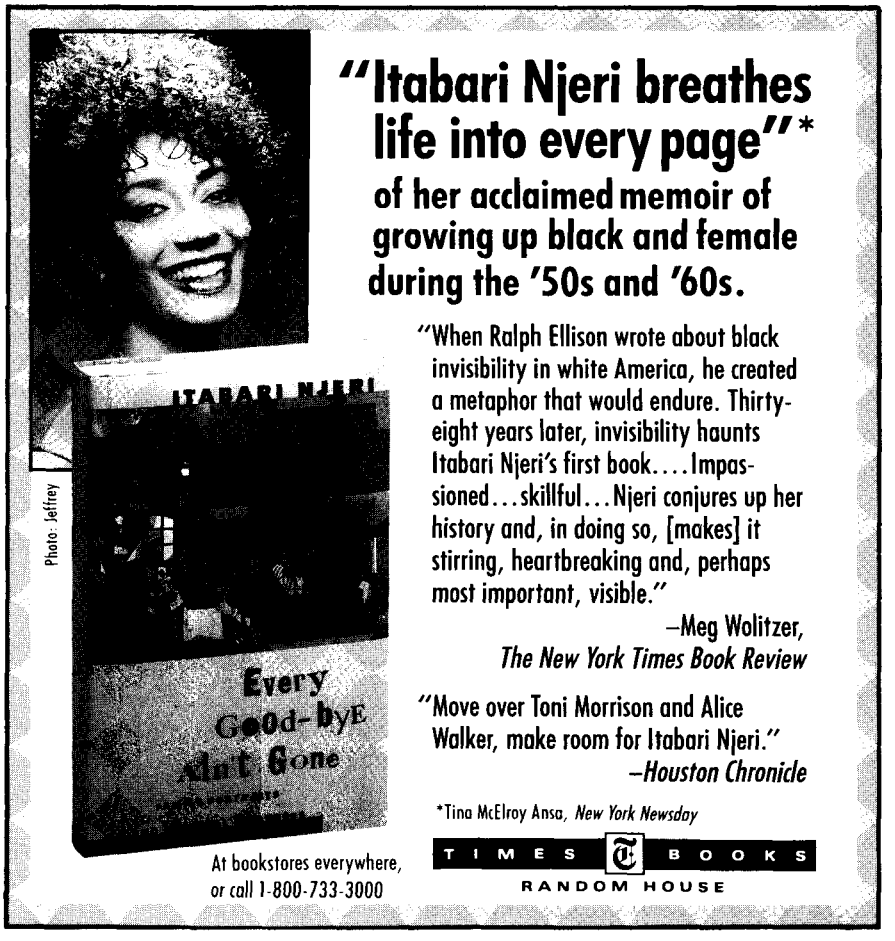
To the editors:

In Veronica Geng's article on Monty Python's Flying Circus ("It's . . .," April 23), she identifies John Cleese as the actor who plays a "shopkeeper trying to sell [a] dead parrot." In point of fact, Cleese appears in the role of a pet-shop customer trying to return a dead parrot to the shopkeeper, Michael Palin.

I realize that some will claim such facts are trivial. Need one point out that the willful neglect of small matters is just the kind of thing that could result in the fall of the Empire?

BRAD STRICKLAND
Oakwood, Georgia

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 21, 1990

DOWN WITH THE COUNT

The 1990 census has made for good political theater. First there was Mitch Snyder, the prominent advocate for (and symbiont of) the homeless, gallantly shielding residents of his shelter from an enumeration he deemed dishonest. Then House Democrats summoned Barbara Bryant, director of the Census Bureau, and berated her for the Bureau's alleged disarray. "It's obvious that the first phase of the census process was a failure," said Representative Vic Fazio.

These spectacles had their intended effect. House Democrats got some free TV time, and Snyder got a chance to reiterate his inflated estimate of several million homeless, and to cast doubt on more responsible estimates. But a disservice has been done to Barbara Bryant, who in fact has performed creditably under difficult circumstances. Further, pointing fingers at Bryant, the target of convenience, diverts attention from higher levels of the Bush administration, where the census is indeed in danger of being subverted. In February Representative Charles Schumer asserted that "someone in Washington doesn't want an accurate count in largely Democratic urban areas." He's right, but that someone isn't Barbara Bryant.

George Bush's commitment to honest enumeration has been suspect since his selection last June of Alan Heslop, a Republican redistricting consultant, as census director. Heslop withdrew after Senate Democrats promised a fight. Though Bush then chose an able and respected quantitative analyst in Bryant, he didn't do so with great urgency. She took office in December, three months before the forms went out. Some have suggested that the delay was intentional: the less organized the census, the larger the undercount, and the larger the undercount, the greater the underrepresentation of heavily Democratic groups, chiefly low-income urbanites. This skews not only political redistricting, but funding for such programs as Head Start.

Whether or not the charge has merit, the administration will get a chance to redeem its image. Next year it must decide whether to permit what would be the first major statistical correction of the census in history, a wholesale adjustment based on interviews with a small sample population. This precedent is amply justified, for the census contains distortions that defy other remedies. Indeed, the problems are so deeply rooted that by the year 2000 it will be time to take the next step and replace the whole messy door-by-door count with statistical inference from sample populations. The census as such is obsolete.

The widely publicized failure of tens of millions of American households to return their census forms should not have surprised anyone. The census return rate, like voter turnout, has fallen as civic responsibility has eroded. In theory, Phase II—when census takers hit the streets, seeking out delinquent respondents—brings all citizens into the enumeration, thus rectifying the underrepresentation of disproportionately delinquent groups, such as low-income families, including many minority families. But it doesn't really work that way. For various reasons, the pursuit of residents in poor neighborhoods is unusually tricky. And even if the census soldiers track down 98 percent of poor delinquents and 98 percent of nonpoor ones, the poor will still be undercounted because they were more commonly delinquent to begin with. In 1980, according to subsequent surveys, the census missed 1.4 percent of the population, including about 6 percent of blacks and Hispanics.

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Faced with a lawsuit from cities that were thereby cheated out of funding, the Commerce Department has reluctantly and tentatively agreed to begin Phase III of the 1990 census: a post-enumeration survey of 150,000 households, from which the size and composition of the group missed in Phases I and II can be inferred. Opposition to this pathbreaking adjustment is coming from two main sources. One is predictable—i.e., Republicans. ("It's an attempt to use a statistical device to achieve political objectives," says Representative Vin Weber in an attempt to achieve political objectives.) The other is well-meaning but naive observers who view statistical adjustment as a black box, impervious to scrutiny and therefore sinister. A *Washington Post* editorial exudes this pre-scientific mindset: "Once the Census Bureau starts down the slippery slope of adjusting census returns, where will it stop?" The *Post* prefers the certainty of a simple "head count" because it yields "a specific number not subject to manipulation." Oh really? Does anyone remember the way Chicago elections used to be run? The integrity of the census—a complex undertaking rife with potential for jiggering—is protected only by the historically high professionalism of the Census Bureau, which, thankfully, has been preserved under Bryant.

Unfortunately, final validation of the statistical adjustment will lie not with her, but with Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher. And the Commerce Department has written guidelines for his decision that leave much room for political discretion. They say, for example, that, before accepting the adjustment, he should consider "the effects such a decision might have on future census efforts." What effects? Well, suppose adjusting the census eroded "public confidence in the census," resulting in "widespread disinclination to participate in future censuses." And think about the "potential disruption of the process of the orderly transfer of political representation." What's a conscientious commerce secretary to do?

Obviously, the "disinclination to participate" in the census is already widespread. During Phase II, census workers will knock on *37 million* doors—one third of the nation's front doors—in search of the more than 75 million Americans who escaped Phase I. Certainly this marks the point in American history when it would be simpler and more accurate to dispense with head counting altogether and rely entirely on intensive statistical sampling by a corps of well-trained interviewers. True, the sample would have to be massive to yield reliable numbers in fine-grained demographic categories, but no more massive than 37 million households.

Assuming that politicians and editorialists can overcome their vestigial fear of arcane statistical techniques, the most common argument against such a system will be constitutional; the Constitution calls for an "enumeration," not a "reliable estimate." But the meaning of "enumeration" is not only "to count," but "to ascertain the number of." And these days the best way to do that is to not start counting in the first place.

FOR WHOM BELL TOLLS

Derrick Bell, a black professor at Harvard Law School, may have been driven by conscience when he announced he would go on strike, unpaid, until the faculty appoints a black female to a tenured post. But it's a strange way to persuade his colleagues. After all, Harvard Law School is not biased against either minorities or women. Roughly half of its recent appointments fit into one of these categories.

Can there be any doubt that Harvard Law School would love to appoint a qualified black woman professor? Bell is implicitly asserting that the school's standards of qualification are wrong—or, to be blunt, too high. But faculties should not feel they cannot scrutinize the credentials of minority candidates. Truly qualified minority candidates are in short supply at this level, and demand is high. As a result, good black academics have their pick of jobs. When Harvard Law does appoint an able black woman, it will probable take her from Michigan or Berkeley. Black women at Harvard will have gained a "role model" Bell says they need—and black women at these other places will have lost *theirs (unless the other places lower their standards to* find a replacement).

Many of the minority students at elite institutions are themselves affirmative action beneficiaries, with lower grades, lower test scores, etc. The pattern persists into professional schools. The typical minority student at a place like Harvard Law School may come from a relatively privileged family and almost surely enjoyed a top secondary and college education. Nevertheless, these students tend to underperform. The absence of role models is the desperate and perhaps psychologically indispensable explanation for what must be a demoralizing phenomenon.

There just aren't enough appropriate role models to go around. Maybe Bell believes that any female black lawyer would do. We don't. In any case, there are already a fair number of male black legal scholars on law faculties, and their presence as role models has not notably lifted the achievements of those whom Bell suggests should be their acolytes.

There is no denying the black crisis, a crisis that goes back in history to slavery and discrimination. The crisis has been exacerbated in our time by a drug epidemic, school drop-out rates, unmarried mothers, fatherless families, and abused and neglected children. One out of four black men between twenty and twenty-nine is in jail or on probation. But this is no explanation for the underperformance of the black middle-class young in our universities. And Professor Bell's solution is no solution at all. What it tells these students is not that hard work will be rewarded. It tells them that the right race and the right gender will push them up the ladder regardless.

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NOTEBOOK

BARNEY BLARNEY: John Soto, who is running for Barney Frank's Massachusetts Congressional seat, does not have AIDS. We know this because he faxed us a copy of his blood test from the Teterboro Laboratory in New Jersey, which indicates that he is HIV-negative. (His blood sugar is normal at 87; cholesterol could be better at 191.) Soto has challenged Frank, who is openly homosexual, to be tested himself and to release the results. Soto says it is a "probability" that Frank has AIDS, because he has engaged in high-risk activity. This is nonsense, and ugly nonsense at that. But what would it matter if Frank, or anyone else in Congress, did have AIDS? "If he developed AIDS, I would be negligent for failing to raise the issue with voters," Soto says. "If he were to die, there would need to be a special election, which would be costly to the voters." How's that for an outpouring of sympathy? Soto also notes that AIDS victims often develop dementia: Frank could go nuts in office and refuse to resign. "I believe I'm the first one to bring up this issue," Soto said. "I'm plowing new ground here." It would be nice to see the centers of Republican officialdom—the Republican National Committee and the National Republican Congressional Committee—distance themselves from this pathetic attempt to capitalize on anti-gay prejudice before others in their party plow deeper. So far they've been notably silent. Frank, however, doesn't seem riled. He's even sympathetic. Soto, he says, "was so proud he passed a test he wanted to go public with it."

TUBE BOOB: After reading an Associated Press report about a recall in Japan of color TV sets prone to emit smoke and catch fire, Representative Doug Walgren of Pennsylvania dashed to the House floor and announced his intention to protect American consumers from "shoddy and unsafe foreign consumer products." Later he drafted a testy letter to the the Consumer Product Safety Commission emphasizing the "serious problem" posed by "defective Japanese appliances." Translation: here's a handy stick, let's beat the Japanese with it. Japan, like most countries in the world, has more relaxed safety standards than does the United States. But this doesn't threaten American consumers. Imported products must meet the same standards as those made here, and the CPSC enforces them quite adequately through customs inspections. And while safety standards and recall provisions are fine things, it doesn't follow that we suffer if Japan doesn't adopt them. Japanese televisions sets are generally of higher quality than those imported from Korea and Western Europe—why doesn't Walgren worry about them? Because safety isn't what he's interested in at all.

COUP DE THÉÂTRE: We can't swear he got the idea from reading our editorial, but Joseph Papp deserves applause for publicly turning down a $50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. As we argued a few weeks ago (see "Indecent Request," April 9), there is something less than compelling about the performance of artists who moan about censorship but continue to accept government handouts on whatever terms they are offered. Papp has put his money where his mouth is, seeking out private contributions to replace his NEA grant for a Latino festival planned for this summer. Admittedly, it's easier for Papp to generate funds than it is for less well-connected arts types. Still, a principled stance taken by a figure of Papp's prominence gives NEA Chairman John Frohnmayer ammunition in his fight to get Congress to delete the obscenity restrictions from this year's appropriations bill. And it reminds Congress that it has made a hash of what was formerly a sound policy in support of the arts. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

LAYING OFF

By Fred Barnes

At the Palm Springs summit last March between President Bush and Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, Bush insisted that Japan ease restrictions on American imports, and Kaifu promised that Japan would. That's the normal ritual at U.S.-Japan talks (except with President Reagan, who didn't like leaning on the Japanese). The surprise was what happened at lunch. Kaifu talked passionately about his party's recent campaign, even poking fun at himself for things that happened to him on the stump. The Bush gang perked up. Kaifu's predecessors, Noboru Takeshita and Yasuhiro Nakasone, didn't talk like that. "I never heard them discuss anything but business," says a White House holdover from the Reagan era. Bush was charmed.

This is important, given the way Bush deals with foreign leaders. He likes to establish the parameters of his relationship with them quickly—where they're on the same wave length, where they've got to agree to disagree—and then keep in touch. That way they have a better shot at trusting each other. Bush also likes the give-and-take to be warm and chatty. With Kaifu, this was possible. (The contrast with other Japanese leaders was brought home when Takeshita, still a powerful politician in Japan, visited Bush two weeks after the

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Palm Springs summit. Their discussion was formal and stony.) Once Bush develops rapport, he's willing to give a foreign colleague considerable slack. He's been amazingly tolerant of the Chinese after Tiananmen Square and of Mikhail Gorbachev over Lithuania. With Kaifu, Bush ignored anti-Japanese sentiment and on April 27 decided against citing Japan as an unfair trading partner.

Kaifu's charm offensive was critical. He kept it up after Palm Springs with two phone calls to Bush, prompting a White House official to declare Kaifu "a new kind of Japanese leader." The first call was to inform Bush that he was dispatching two special envoys to sit in on the new round of U.S.-Japan trade talks, the Structural Impediments Initiative. The second came after negotiators issued upbeat reports as the talks ended. He and Bush discussed the substance of the talks (Japanese cartels, hostility to discount stores, etc.). Before he hung up, Kaifu made small talk. He'd been working long hours on Japan's stance in the talks, he said. "Tonight, I'm going to get a real night's sleep," Kaifu added. Bush could identify with that.

Not that Bush had been staying up half the night on trade worries. Before Palm Springs, Bush and his aides boned up on specific issues. On the Air Force One flight to California, Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser, approached an official with this question: "Amorphous metals?" The aide hastily dug up information about that dispute, which involves Japanese reluctance to import an especially efficient type of American-made generator. Bush, Scowcroft, and their aides knew from personal experience that Japanese prime ministers routinely claim they'll move aggressively to open Japan to more American goods. Then nothing happens. Even when the United States and Japan divided up the world semiconductor market, American producers got less than their agreed-upon share.

Kaifu wisely did more than schmooze. At Palm Springs Bush's aides were not persuaded by Kaifu's promise of greater access to Japanese markets. "I'll go home and do something about this," Kaifu said. And as a surprised White House official remarked later, "By God, he did." Kaifu made substantial concessions in the SII talks. He cleaned up messy disagreements over supercomputers, satellites, and wood products left over from 1989, when Bush cited Japan as an unfair trading partner under Super 301 of the Trade Act. Kaifu committed Japan to liberalize restrictions on telecommunications and improve protection for American sound recordings. And he agreed to a timetable (150 days) for reaching agreement on imports of amorphous metals. You can belittle this last item, but take note that the U.S. Special Trade Representative's office says the amorphous metals case is "a paradigm of high technology market access in Japan." So there.

All these concessions made life easier for Carla Hills, the special trade representative. They justified her conclusion that Japan shouldn't be named again as an unfair trader. Thus she could recommend to Bush, Kaifu's new buddy, what she and everyone else in the administration knew he wanted to hear. Hills has the additional problem of needing the Japanese as an ally in multilateral trade talks this year. If Japan had been cited again, U.S.-Japan cooperation would be touch-and-go. Her credibility was also at stake. She'd demanded concessions and gotten many of them from Japan. Were Japan cited again anyway as an unfair trading partner, she says, "that doesn't make for a very good negotiator."

From the start, Secretary of State James Baker urged that Japan not be named. That's par for the course for the State Department. Zinging an ally for bad trade practices upsets the relationship. It causes friction. What Secretary of State wants that? Baker offered an argument that Bush was bound to find compelling. He said it isn't in America's interest to undermine Kaifu, as accommodating a Japanese prime minister as America will ever get. Kaifu is not strong politically in Japan. Why make things worse for him? Besides, if Japan were tarred as an unfair trader after Kaifu made significant concessions, no prime minister would yield to American demands in the future. Baker also said the political backlash on Capitol Hill from letting Japan off the hook wouldn't amount to much. Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher and Treasury Secretary Nick Brady thought Baker was wrong. It turned out Baker was right.

Mosbacher knew Bush was pro-Kaifu. After Palm Springs, says a Commerce official, "it was clear Bush had sized up Kaifu as a guy he likes and can do business with. The President's view was that you can keep pressure on the Japanese without citing them." Mosbacher, Bush's pal from Houston, didn't agree. He wanted Japan to be cited, but not for any specific violation. That way, Japan would be under "concrete" pressure to move toward free trade. The overall U.S.-Japan relationship would be less frayed because no specific negotiations would be required.

At a meeting of the Economic Policy Council on April 26, Mosbacher trotted out this argument. He was backed by Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole, whose constituents (organized labor) don't like the Japanese. Hills gunned them down. With the Mosbacher approach, she said the United States would get "all the bad and none of the good." The Japanese would be apoplectic. When they asked what they'd done wrong, there wouldn't be anything specific to tell them. Hills said Japan had made great progress. She argued it was time to move from confrontation to cooperation. When the vote came at the end of the meeting, Bush's economic advisers were unanimously (including Mosbacher and Dole) against naming Japan. Bush went along.

The decision brought joy to the Japanese. On April 29 Mosbacher invited a delegation headed by Kabun Muto, the chief of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, to his house for a Western barbecue. A huge tent was erected in the backyard. The Japanese went native. In place of their ties, they wore bandanas. •

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A billion points of shade?

SEED MONEY

By Daniel Gross

George Bush loves trees. During the annual Easter Egg Roll on the White House lawn, foot-high Virginia pine seedlings were distributed to all visitors. Earlier in April, Bush planted an American Elm in Indianapolis and dedicated it to Ryan White, the Indiana teenager who died of AIDS soon afterward. "Trees are in a larger sense the sanctuaries of mankind," Bush said, striking a Druidical note. "For their beauty is breathtaking, and their bounty, breath-giving." Aside from extolling their obvious aesthetic value, a resourceful Bush has discovered other, more practical uses for trees. Ronald Reagan thought trees caused pollution; George Bush thinks trees can arrest global warming and promote volunteerism.

What trees do best, though, is allow Bush to score cheap political points with nature lovers. After Bush promised "the money to plant a billion trees a year" in his State of the Union address, environmentalists quickly warmed to the proposal. But Bush's "America the Beautiful" tree-planting initiative offers logs for skeptics's buzzsaws. As a government-proposed volunteer program, it is laden with rosy expectations, low funding levels, false assumptions, hokey rhetoric, and no small amount of hypocrisy.

Under America the Beautiful, for each of the next ten years beginning with fiscal year 1991, Bush proposes that individual citizens plant 30 million trees in cities and towns, and that landowners, farmers, and the timber industry plant some 970 million seedlings in decimated forests and marginal farmlands all over the country. The initiative is an ambitious undertaking, especially considering that only 2.2 billion trees are planted annually. (The government plants about 10 percent of them.) Bush has funded America the Beautiful with $175 million for fiscal year 1991—$110 million for rural planting and $65 million for urban trees. But more than half of the urban component, $35 million, will go toward establishing the America the Beautiful Foundation. The White House hopes the foundation will eventually raise hundreds of millions of dollars from private and corporate sources to fund adequately the urban program. Until that happens, America the Beautiful will supposedly plant 30 million trees for $30 million—a dollar per urban tree.

Unfortunately, it costs anywhere from $125 to $500 each to plant and nurture urban seedlings, which must be older and sturdier than rural ones, and are available only from commercial nurseries. In addition to the tree itself, which can cost as little as $35, planters must pay for root control ($35), stakes ($10 each), fertilizer ($10), ties, and tools. Often holes must be hewn in concrete to accommodate seedlings ($50). Factor in water, maintenance, and administrative costs, and cultivating urban trees is an expensive proposition. TreePeople, a volunteer, nonprofit tree-planting group based in Los Angeles, planted 400 trees in the city on Martin Luther King's birthday. Even with the free labor, help from city employees, and corporate sponsorship, TreePeople spent $130,000—$325 per poplar.

The federal funding for the rural component of the initiative is more realistic, but nonetheless inadequate. And the $110 million figure is misleading, because this year Bush whacked $32 million from existing government reforestation programs. Planting rural trees is quite cheap, since many of the expenses associated with urban planting don't come into play. (The tiny seedlings, for example, cost between three and fifteen cents each.) Still, to meet the annual target of 970 million rural trees, planters would have to fill about 1.5 million acres (an area somewhat larger than Delaware). At the U.S. Forest Service's average estimate of $110 per acre, it would cost $165 million to plant the target acreage—50 percent more than Bush wants to provide.

Given the financial and logistical complications, environmentalists justifiably question whether a billion trees will really be planted each year. "Some trees are obviously going to get planted," says Eric Washburn, an environmental scientist with the National Resources Defense Council. "But you're going to be lucky to get a fourth of that, and many of those will die." Fire and natural attrition limit the number of seedlings surviving to maturity, and infant trees are especially vulnerable to drought. During the long, hot summer of 1988, 60 to 80 percent of new seedlings died in drought-stricken areas. Many of the trees planted under America the Beautiful will be sown on such marginal land.

Even if the funding were sufficient to finance the planting of a billion abnormally hearty trees per year, this program would not reverse global warming trends, as its sponsors expect it to. America the Beautiful bills itself as "an interim approach to reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide." But even the Herculean efforts Bush advocates would reduce only annual emissions, not the total amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere. Both supporters and critics of the initiative say planting a billion trees for the next ten years could reduce the amount of new CO_2 emitted into the atmosphere annually by 1 to 3 percent. But given current trends, just to maintain the current intolerable CO_2 level over the next 40 years, annual emissions would have to be halved. "To offset all the emissions from the globe in the next 40 years you'd have to plant an area the size of the continental United States," says Michael Oppenheimer, author of *Dead Heat: The Race Against the Greenhouse Effect.*

George Bush's passion for trees is welcome. They provide shade, stability, and beauty. The United States would be a nicer place if we had more of them. But if

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Bush is serious about his arboreal crusade, there's a more practical place to begin. The U.S. Forest Service continues to disregard the 1976 law passed by Congress requiring the Service to apply the same efforts to conservation as it does to helping out the timber industry. About a third of the Service's funds go to building logging roads and bridges and managing the sale of timber. (See "Timber" by Karen Franklin, TNR, January 2, 1989.) For example, Bush's 1991 budget requests $67 million for Alaska's Tongass rainforest, a 20 percent increase over last year. But the lion's share of these funds facilitate the felling of some 17,000 acres of 400-year-old spruces; no 1991 funds are earmarked for Tongass reforestation. Instead of encouraging the planting of essentially symbolic baby trees, perhaps Bush should start trying to save (and replace) some great big ones. In other words, he shouldn't miss the forest thing for the tree thing. •

Brazil's electric prescription.

SHOCK TREATMENT

By James S. Henry

One would expect Brazilians to be absolutely livid at their new president, Fernando Collor de Mello. In the past two months Brazil's economy has entered its worst recession in forty years. Most bank deposits have been frozen; loans have dried up; the São Paulo stock market has collapsed; retail sales, construction, and industrial production have dropped by more than 60 percent; at least 300,000 workers have been laid off, and hundreds of thousands more are likely to get the boot soon. Dozens of state companies have been closed, taxes and prices for public services have increased sharply, and the Policia Federal are cracking down on thousands of tax evaders. Yet Collor's popularity has soared to over 65 percent, his political enemies are in disarray, and he seems to have a good chance of pulling off one of the most far-reaching economic reforms in Latin America ever. What's going on?

Collor, a forty-year-old former governor of Alagoas, Brazil's poorest state, is the country's first directly elected president since 1961. He scored a 53 to 47 percent victory over the socialist Labor Party candidate, Luiz Inacio da Silva ("Lula"), in last December's elections. This was hardly a mandate for sweeping economic reform—it was due mainly to a last-minute blitz of anti-communist propaganda and smears regarding Lula's personal life. But some kind of reform was clearly needed. Brazil, the third largest democracy in the world, once had the world's fastest growing economy. But after twenty-one years of military rule and five years of José Sarney, Brazil's economy had become stagnant and inequality had increased sharply. Under Sarney the country had exhausted four economic plans, three currencies, four finance ministers, five Central Bank presidents, and a whole generation of World Bank and IMF staffers. When Collor took office in mid-March, the public debt was so large that most of the deficit was due to interest payments, inflation exceeded 70 percent a month, foreign investment and reserves had dried up completely, and more than $120 billion of liquid assets were sloshing around the banking system, threatening to set off hyperflation.

Because Collor had won the election by red-baiting, most people had only the vaguest idea about how he would address such problems. The left expected him to be primarily an agent of the elite. The scion of a wealthy Alagoas family and a former model and karate champion, Collor had achieved power through his father's media empire, his close ties to the military, and a first marriage to Brazil's richest woman. Collor's "Class A" supporters—bankers, state employees, large-scale farmers, investors, lawyers, brokers, and protected industrialists—also expected Collor to be their agent. They believed he would get the economy in shape, but not at their expense. Brazil's bankers favored "moderate"—not zero—inflation, since some inflation actually helped their profits. Businessmen favored privatization of state companies but didn't want to be drafted to fund it. Exporters favored devaluation but also liked import controls that sheltered them from foreign competition. Large-scale farmers enjoyed low taxes and high subsidies . . . and so on.

Everyone was in for a shock. The day after his inauguration, Collor announced an economic plan that went after precisely these Class A interests. The stock market fell by more than 50 percent in one week, and cardiac clinics in Rio and São Paulo were suddenly filled to capacity. Described by the usually conservative *Jornal do Brasil* as Brazil's "greatest revolution ever," the plan was viewed as roughly the equivalent of Nixon going to China, Sadat visiting Begin, or Gorbachev dismantling central planning. A leading member of the Labor Party said, "If we had done this we would have been overthrown." Almost as surprising, the National Congress approved almost all the major aspects of Collor's plan by a wide margin.

The plan's most dramatic element was a radical monetary reform, designed to launch a preemptive strike against inflation. The government placed an immediate freeze on all bank deposits of more than 50,000 *cruzados* (about $1,200). The freeze was enforced by a clever device, a switch from the *cruzado* to the *cruzeiro* as the medium of exchange; people were not allowed to convert their bank deposits to the new currency for eighteen months. Deposits effectively became a forced loan to the government, to be repaid with 6 percent interest. Although the reform freezes 80 percent of the economy's liquid assets, it affects only the top 10 percent of the electorate—the only ones with bank accounts.

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This part of the plan drew heavily on the Allied powers' 1948 monetary reform of the German economy and on Carlos Menem's frustrating experiences in Argentina. Like Collor, Menem had started out as a popular president and had also tried economic shock therapy—slashing subsidies, raising taxes, liberalizing exchange rates and import barriers, and negotiating a new deal with foreign banks. But all these fiscal measures affected the rate of inflation only indirectly. By the time Menem's central bankers got around to controlling inflation by tightening up on the money supply, the opposition had become overwhelming. Investors lost confidence, and the demand for gold and dollars soared. By March 1990, inflation was 100 percent a month, and Menem was dancing his last tango. Collor's economists concluded from this that only a dramatic monetary shock would permit other reforms to succeed. And so far the monetary reform seems to have worked: inflation has already fallen to nearly zero.

The other ingredients in Collor's revolution are just as radical, and, from the standpoint of turning Brazil into a vibrant market economy, more important. The administration has fired at least 40,000 government workers, slashed subsidies to the private sector, and closed twenty-three loss-making state companies, including the steel company Siderbras, the port authority Portobras, and the monstrous Coffee, Sugar, and Alcohol Institute. It will also privatize all but a handful of 188 state-owned companies, which have a combined deficit of $62 billion, and will require Brazil's banks to buy shares in a kind of mutual fund for these companies.

On the revenue side the government has increased a variety of taxes and prices for public services like telephones and airlines. For the first time in history Brazil will tax the profits of farmers, one of the most influential lobbies, and will also pursue serious land reform. New taxes also have been added on capital gains and gold, and there is a new three-fourths percent tax on private wealth. Finally, Collor put Romeu Tuma, the highly regarded chief of the federal police, in charge of the tax bureau as well, showing that he is very serious about cracking down on tax evasion, now running at 2 to 3 percent of national income. All these measures clearly distinguish Collor's reforms from those in other debt-ridden, developing countries like Mexico and the Philippines, which have been slow to enforce taxes on income or capital.

As for Collor's new trade policies, for the first time since the 1920s Brazil's exchange rate will float, and import controls and tariffs will be slashed. This will lead to an immediate devaluation, a stimulus to exports, and a cost increase for the state sector—by far the largest importer. More important, the plan also means even tougher times for industries previously sheltered from foreign competition, like computer and aircraft manufacturers and cement producers. Meanwhile, on the foreign debt, Collor has promised to obtain a 50 percent reduction in interest costs—through negotiations, of course.

What are the likely political implications of Collor's plan? As one former director of capital markets for Brazil's Central Bank noted just after the plan's announcement, the 1948 German monetary reform worked only because the U.S. Army was on hand to suppress resistance. True, but in Germany it wasn't just the top 10 percent of the population who had bank deposits; although bankers and industrialists in Brazil are openly distressed, most of the country seems to believe the plan will hurt only the top group. Indeed, a wide spectrum of conservative and liberal economists and newspapers have given the plan at least grudging support. The Labor Party, though, is concerned about a recession, and some leftists have attacked the plan for not being more aggressive on the foreign debt. For the moment the opposition is clearly off balance. But as layoffs spread and the recession deepens, the illusion that the plan hurts only Brazil's elites may disappear. Clearly that is what Collor's opposition is hoping.

There are other threats to Collor's popularity as well. Although he currrently enjoys the support of a majority in Congress and most of Brazil's state governors, both Congress and twenty-two state governors are up for election in October. Furthermore, there is a strong whiff of parliamentarism in the air. Brazil's new constitution calls for a plebiscite on a switch to parliamentary rule in 1993, but if Collor somehow stumbles, Congress might move that date up with a constitutional amendment, which requires only a three-fifths vote.

So Collor needs to have the economy bounce back from his sharp recession—without reigniting inflation—by October. He also could use a new debt deal from foreign banks and the U.S. Treasury, a proposition that is highly uncertain given the banks' reluctance of late to advance new loans to Third World countries.

But Fernando Collor is nothing if not audacious. Neither the left nor the right had considered the possibility that he might actually try to serve the interests of "Class D," the poor and unorganized people of the slums, the smaller cities, and the north who account for 70 percent of the electorate and were the overwhelming source of his support. To these people Collor is a populist hero, the enemy of Sarneyism, and the hunter of "maharajas," public servants who do nothing. Arresting inflation would help "unbanked" poor people as much as anyone, but they also want him to attack the privileges and corruption of the organized elites and government workers. And that appears to be exactly what he is doing.

The risk is that Collor will turn out to be just another Janio Quadros, Brazil's last elected president. After all, Janio was also a conservative moralizing populist who launched a vigorous stabilization program to cut Brazil's budget deficit and inflation, negotiated a debt deal with foreign banks and the IMF, attacked corruption and inefficiency in government, and had Napoleonic tendencies. Janio Quadros lasted only eight months in office, from January to August 1961. But if Collor's plan works and his supporters win in October, he could easily become Brazil's most powerful president since Getulio Vargas in the '40s and early '50s. The word is that Collor's staff is

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already thinking about changing the constitution so he can run for president again in 1994.

Before Collor took office, many cynics dismissed him as an arrogant, unprincipled child of the elite who was willing to do or say anything to increase his power base. There was much truth to this. But it may just be Collor's independence and vaulting ambition that permit him to cut through the network of interests that has deadlocked Brazil's economic policy for so long.

JAMES S. HENRY writes frequently about developing countries.

The Chamorros, the Ortegas, and the country.

CRISIS OF THE CLANS

By Arturo Cruz Jr. and Consuelo Cruz Sequeira

By dawn he knew he had miscalculated, and loneliness set in. His wife was distraught; their coterie of friends, sycophants, and allies stunned. At that moment his campaign manager, a harsh man with a sardonic smile, was the only *comandante* of the revolution by his side. The rest of the Sandinista high command and his own brother, General Humberto Ortega, were nowhere in sight.

Fidel Castro, the revolutionary father, had advised him against it. But he risked the presidency, and in an effort to transform himself into the candidate every Nicaraguan could vote for, he discarded his military uniform. Now, in a society where political struggle is often barbaric but where titles, dignity, and status are the most cherished prize of power, he was about to become profoundly poor and weak. He would soon have to face the assembled leaders of the Frente Sandinista, who were eager to remind him that *he*—not the party—was the loser.

Remembrance proved Daniel Ortega's escape route. Violeta Chamorro, who had just triumphed at the polls, had been his ally in the revolution against the Somozas. It was as her former ally that early that morning he visited her home, where he graciously conceded defeat. This exceptional gesture allowed for a moment of sudden intimacy during which, moved by genuine affection, they embraced five times. Then Daniel, the son of a traditional, Catholic lady from Chontales, gathered his wife and children and went to church. Cardinal Obando Y Bravo, the most popular prelate in the country and an antagonist of the official Sandinista Church, invited Daniel to sit next to the altar during mass, close to the icons of the Catholic family.

Finally, in what was both a tactical move and a fraternal plea for renewed unity, Daniel knocked at his brother's door. Their alliance was still strong, but division had begun to set in. Humberto was the general, the man with the tanks and the troops; Daniel was the face that Nicaragua, a "theater-country," had presented to the world. Over the years Daniel had begun to feel constrained by his dependence on Humberto, and Humberto felt relegated to the shadows, a powerful man but not a personage. They talked intensely, and Daniel again found protection in his brother. Now he would face the Party, and perhaps survive.

The Party leaders criticized his adventurist electoral bid, and, predictably, Tomás Borge—the minister of the interior and guardian of orthodoxy—was especially bitter. Patiently, Daniel explained again the calculation behind the decision to hold elections: now that the Soviet empire was on the retreat and unwilling to finance the old socialist model, elections were necessary to revive the economy and finish off the contras. Besides, the organizational skills and resources of the Frente were exceptional; the opposition was fragmented and anarchic. But the attacks continued. Daniel, the son of the traditional lady from Chontales, was trapped in his role as the son of the Frente Sandinista.

Daniel broke free momentarily: he reassured the leaders that the Frente Sandinista still controlled the weapons and a vast organizational apparatus, then appeared at a mass meeting in Managua's Plaza of the Non-Aligned, where he publicly announced that the Frente Sandinista would continue to govern from below. But even as he spoke, Daniel knew he had set in motion a transitional dynamic that he could shape, perhaps, but not reverse. First, he traveled to Brazil and Venezuela in an effort to affirm his image as Nicaragua's foremost international figure. Everywhere he went, he portrayed himself as indispensable to the peaceful transition to democracy. Next, upon his return, he and his brother Humberto reminded the Chamorro clan that they had been allies before; why not again? The real problem, the brothers argued, was Tomás Borge and his rigid faction. But if Humberto retained the army, they said, the original Tercerista ("Third-Wayist") alliance could be reconstituted and the Borge problem solved once and for all.

In 1979 Borge placed his bets on the security apparatus while other *comandantes* chose the Party. Humberto Ortega, on the other hand, understood from the beginning that no mass party, however cohesive, could survive in Nicaragua without control of the national budget, and that no government could survive without the army. In 1990 General Ortega prefers to resign from the Party than to surrender his four stars. And in a Nicaragua where the ancient and powerful spirit of family-based politics has been reawakened, he cannot afford simply to transfer his post to one of his high-ranking officers—many of whom are sons of the old oligarchy.

General Ortega will retain control of the army because those in Chamorro's inner circle realize that their old ally wants to be an undisputed general more than a Marxist revolutionary. This is both acceptable and use-

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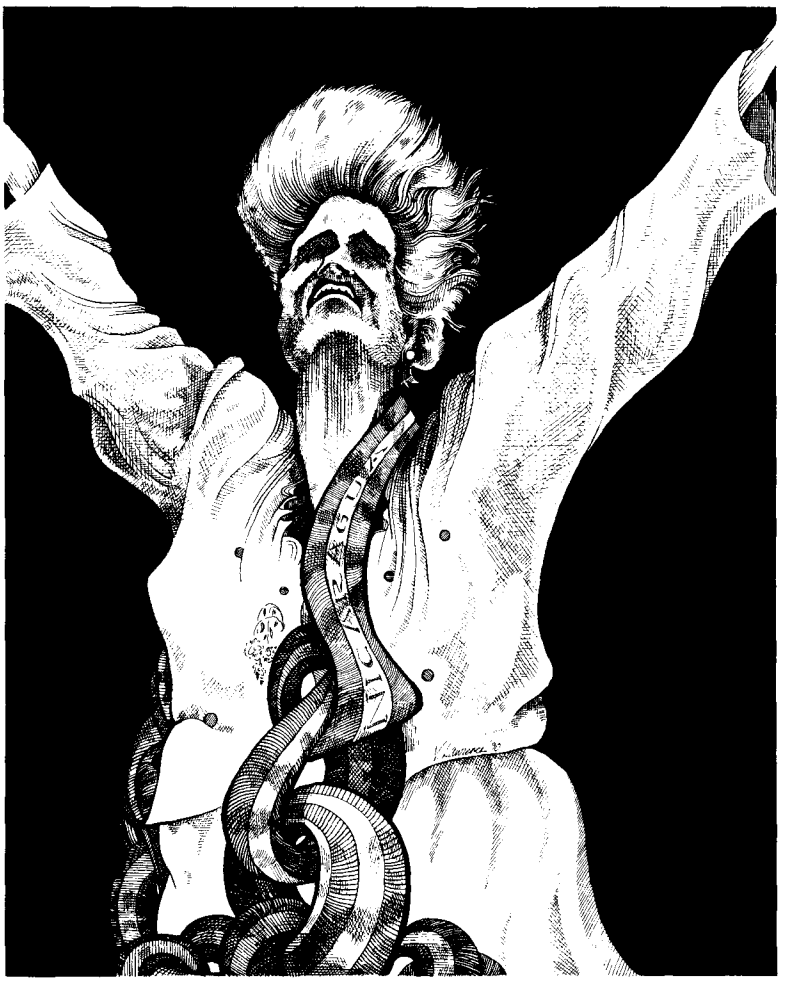
ful to them, because they know how to deal with generals, and this general will know how to handle Borge, and, if necessary, the contras—not those fractious contra politicians who abandoned the contra project long ago, but the peasant rebels who resent the emerging pact between the old and the new families at the top.

Such pacts are a Nicaraguan tradition. In the twentieth century, "new people" like José Santos Zelaya (the strongman overthrown in 1909) and the Somozas successively expanded the army, then compromised and merged with the old political elite. As we approach the twenty-first century, it is the Ortegas' turn; and judging from the past, it would seem as if the transition to old-style "stability" is assured. But in fact Nicaragua is in the midst of a succession crisis, and like Daniel on the dawn of his electoral defeat, and Chamorro's advisers during their negotiations with the Ortegas, other Nicaraguans are searching the past for clues about how to proceed into an uncertain future.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

"Franklyn," the twenty-nine-year-old top contra rebel, has begun to compare himself to General Sandino, who in 1927 rejected a pact between the American Henry Stimson and General Moncads. Franklyn perceives General Ortega's continued tenure in the army as an affront to the dignity and sacrifice of the rebels' long combat, and is demanding full demilitarization of Nicaraguan society. If contra representatives have signed vague peace accords and, in Honduras, surrendered some outdated weapons (as Sandino did in the early '30s), they also have kept the majority of their troops, now inside Nicaraguan territory, well armed.

UNO, the tenuous coalition of opposition parties that nominated Chamorro, also feels betrayed, or at least excluded by the hermetic circle surrounding their victorious candidate. Their unhappiness is the result of a deep conflict between two political institutions: the family and the political party. The family operates out of its home and according to a strict exclusionary code. The more intimate the room, the closer one gets to power. To swing in the hammock of the ruler's bedroom is to experience glory; to be made to wait out on the sidewalk is to suffer humiliation.

Political parties, on the other hand, must either swell in size, forge broad alliances, or fade into the background. To fit the UNO coalition into Chamorro's home would have been both a physical impossibility and a violation of the code that governs family-based politics. So the momentous decision to retain General Ortega as army chief was reached by Chamorro's kitchen cabinet, even though the UNO coalition felt collectively responsible for Chamorro's electoral victory. UNO resented the decision. Disgruntled politicos quickly positioned themselves to exploit this resentment to their own advantage.

So while the outside world grows impatient and bored with Nicaraguans, in the National Assembly (where UNO has a majority) there is an explosion of intrigues and ephemeral alliances that last only days, sometimes barely hours. Disillusion leads to uncertainty: the new vice president, Virgilio Godoy, is already at odds with Chamorro's inner circle. Uncertainty leads to gambles: opposition members who yesterday were enraged by General Ortega's renewed appointment may well be his allies tomorrow. Not everyone can remain at the core of the inner circle: there are indications of shifting alliances within the Chamorro clan. Allies are enemies, and enemies are allies, so appearances become paramount. The weak hide their weakness as best they can, while those who are slightly stronger exaggerate their meager power and exalt themselves.

The list of obstacles to national reconstruction also includes an economic crisis that cannot be solved by external aid alone. Since 1979 half a million people have left Nicaragua, including its most skilled workers, professionals, and farmers—in short, its human capital. Most of them are reluctant to return, afraid to exchange their hard-earned security abroad for chaos at home. To make matters worse, Nicaraguans have also migrated in-

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ternally in the last decade: the population of the capital has doubled, each newcomer adding to an already insatiable demand for housing, public transport, health services, clothing, toothpaste, toilet paper. . .

After prolonged deprivation, everyone is eager to consume. But the economy is in dire need of capital investment. Between 1979 and 1982 alone, Nicaragua received a net capital inflow of $1.6 billion, an immense sum for a country with a GNP of $2 billion. Most of it went to naught. The revolutionary government, for example, offered credit to private investors but also warned them that they would be expropriated in the future. Predictably, private investment fell drastically; and as increased public investment proved disastrously unproductive, the exodus of human and domestic financial capital accelerated. Exports suffered immediately, but as long as there were soft foreign loans and grants to pay the huge import bill, the Nicaraguan economy grew. The moment these inflows began to diminish, the economy began its decline into abject poverty.

The war was not the cause of this decline, but an aggravating factor. Now, even in the unlikely case that the Ortegas and the Chamorros do manage to establish some sort of political balance, the reconstruction of the economy poses an almost impossible challenge. To begin with, the new government must find a way to increase both consumption and investment. Here, ironically, measured rather than large foreign capital injections would be best in order to avoid inefficiency and corruption. On the other hand, skilled workers, expert farmers, and professionals are needed in the largest possible numbers. Essential, too, are politicians, businessmen, and labor leaders imaginative enough to move together toward innovative, productive reorganization and disciplined enough to restructure an entire economy.

There are at least two possible outcomes to Nicaragua's succession crisis. One would hark back to a past when a general on horseback emerged from the violence and anarchy to impose order for a few decades; the other would inaugurate the millennium of hope. One would signify the triumph of a clever man's maneuvering, the other would bespeak broad cultural and political transformation among the citizenry. In one the protagonist would be General Ortega, in the other a stronger, more politicized civil society.

There is reason to hope for hope. For the first time, the average citizen has exercised the power of the secret ballot, which enables him to change rulers without having to send his sons off to war. Peasant and labor unions and professional organizations that are both strong *and* independent are viable at last. And new, independent publications are already available to readers. Finally, there is history, which tells us that in the end the generals on horseback, their statues, and their heirs have one by one been eradicated from the public space by the Nicaraguan people.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra, a great national poet, has never tired of describing the millennium of hope: Nicaraguans see one another as people, and, as Mrs. Chamorro said in her inaugural address, a new republic is born, not of screams and bullets, but of the deepest silence of the Nicaraguan soul—the conscience.

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The Knesset's perpetual snarl.

GRIDLOX

By Edward Norden

JERUSALEM

It takes a year for an immigrant to Israel to get a voting card. In that time, especially if the immigrant is more like a refugee, he or she must overcome the euphoria and culture shock, get a handle on Hebrew, and find an apartment and a job. Understanding the principles of multi-party democracy, much less democracy as it is practiced in Israel, can wait. Nevertheless, the Soviet Jews who are flying in at the rate of more than ten thousand a month have eyes and ears, and even if there weren't newspapers and radio programs in their languages, Russian and Yiddish and Georgian, they couldn't hope to escape politics. The level of political commotion lately has been extraordinary, even for the Jewish state. And the doings have disgraced all the many parties.

Secretary of State James Baker's reading of the Israeli proposal for talks about elections for the Palestinians in the occupied territories brought down the durable, fragile, ironically named "national unity government." Shimon Peres, chief of the Labor Party, claimed he was pulling out with a heavy heart. But he was all smiles when the Knesset's vote of no confidence, which he engineered, went Labor's way. There followed his predictably hectic, often sordid, basically hopeless attempt to patch together his own coalition, a "narrow" government that would have said yes to Baker and gone to Cairo to negotiate with PLO front-men for the repartition of the country and peace. That was hard enough. Then George Bush opined that Jerusalem too is occupied territory. Jerusalem is the magic word—say it and you stop the peace process in its tracks.

Peres did his best; that is, his worst. A believer in the redemptive power of ends over means, he chased the rabbis and anyone else who could give him a parliamentary majority, and the Likud did likewise to foil him. The local media covered every caress and low blow, every bribe and double cross. Last week Peres finally had to admit failure. In private, the more per-

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spicacious Israeli doves are relieved. They understand that a narrow government conceived in sin and beholden to Arab-based parties that take their orders from Yasir Arafat could tear the frayed fabric of Israeli society in two.

Now it's Yitzhak Shamir's turn to try to make a government. He has forty-five days to do it, and if the First Law of Israeli Politics holds, he'll use them all. That law states that everything must take as long as it possibly can. It goes nicely with the Second and Third Laws, which state that everything must be as complicated as possible and that the outcome of any crisis must never solve anything. The smart money is betting that in the end, having exhausted themselves and disgusted the electorate, the Labor and Likud politicians will reconstitute a unity government whose only mandate will be not to decide anything one way or the other.

That isn't what the Bush administration had in mind when it helped Peres precipitate the crisis. Its point man, Bob Dole, minced no words when he said in Jerusalem, "We just wish there was a government here so we could put the pressure on." Nor is a unity government what Shamir's opponents in the Likud's own right wing, like Ariel Sharon, yearn for. They're going to battle down to the wire for their own narrow government. If Sharon is in for the same disappointment as Dole, it's because a sufficient number of Israeli hawks are also perspicacious, and realize that a narrow government of religious and nationalist fanatics that simply told Baker to go jump in the Potomac could also tear Israel apart and estrange it from even more of its unhappy friends in the world. Prominent among the brainy hawks is Shamir. He knows that at the head of a narrow rightist coalition, he'd be hostage to the sort of messianic types who have tried to settle around the corner from the Holy Sepulcher in the Christian Quarter. Shamir is unreconstructed, but he's not crazy.

For the center in Israel to hold, there has to be a government of national paralysis. This is and isn't widely understood among ordinary, long-suffering Israelis. If the great Soviet exodus is boosting their morale, the politicians are battering it, and many think that if the rascals could just be thrown out, or the system purified, things would be better.

The cry has gone up again to reform the electoral system and squelch the little parties. The idea is that by either dividing the country into districts or raising the percentage threshold for a party to enter the Knesset, and instituting American- or French-style direct election of the chief executive, Israel would cure itself of hyperdemocracy and could get on with the urgent business at hand. Such ideas have been around a long time. The politicians in the past have piously endorsed them, then forgotten them in committee. This time a mass protest movement for reform has materialized that reminds some of the demonstrations after the Yom Kippur War, complete with hunger strikers outside the Knesset. If perestroika can come to the USSR, one protester asked, can't Israel become a normal country as well?

To which the answer is, "Maybe, but probably not soon." Even if the system is changed—something no one should bet on—there's no guarantee that this would make Israel immediately much more governable. The French, like the Americans before them, have had to learn cohabitation. In Israel, too, one party might win the Knesset and the other the premiership, perpetuating the standoff and the corruption. The culture of democratic politics everywhere mimics public culture rather than the other way around, and in this country, as Soviet newcomers are saddened to discover, public culture has come to be marked by trickiness, greed, and mutual distrust verging on anarchy. If the Arabs weren't in even worse shape, they might delude themselves that the glue holding Israeli society together is giving way. Seemingly the only point of consensus remaining, the only article of the social contract still intact, is that the country's doors are to be open to any Jew who shows up.

Electoral reform wouldn't provide answers to the two existential questions that bedevil and animate Israeli life: how to try to make peace with the Arabs, and how—beyond keeping the doors open—to define and exemplify the Jewishness of the Jewish state. The answer to the first question probably depends more on the various Arabs than on the Israelis. The answer to the second probably must await the day, coming in the next century, when the majority of the world's Jews will live here. Israel is a country in formation.

So is Palestine. The Palestinians came along as a reaction to Zionism, and it's still unclear what the shape and extent of their own homeland is to be. Will it include all of what is now Israel, as stipulated in the PLO's charter? Will Palestine end up restricted to the East Bank of the Jordan River, today ruled by King Hussein, as the Israeli right wing advocates? Or will there flower in time some kind of ingenious, amazing compromise? The exodus from the Soviet Union may speed up or delay the clarification of these matters. It has already upset the conventional wisdom about the role of time.

Both sides in the Arab-Israeli fight have long been fond of asserting that "time is on our side." Time in this usage is synonymous with history and/or God. Two things are always said to follow: first, that the side being abetted by time should sit tight and give nothing away; and second, that the other side must hurry up and come to terms. Most Arabs as well as Israeli doves in the years leading up to the exodus from the Soviet Union believed that time was working against Israel. They pointed to the so-called demographic time bomb and its inescapable effect. It was said that by the turn of the century, the Palestinians, because of their higher birth rate, would be the majority between the Mediterranean and Jordan, that is, in Israel and the occupied territories together. On that day, Zionism, or Israeli democracy, or both, would be finished.

This specter persuaded many that if the Israelis knew what was good for them, they would hurry up and negotiate their way out of the territories. This was the

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centerpiece of the conventional wisdom before Gorbachev opened the exits and the United States half-closed the doors to Brooklyn. Thanks to the exodus, the moment of demographic truth will be postponed until at least 2010. The realization of this among Israeli voters and politicians will probably give most of them, rightly or wrongly, another reason not to rush into substantive negotiations with the Palestinians, i.e., the PLO.

From this angle, the exodus fits very badly into the not necessarily identical game plans of Peres, Baker, and Arafat. But although Israeli hawks are the ones happiest about it, the wisest among them also know that even a huge influx of Soviet Jews can't automatically set their fears to rest. If the nightmare of the doves is a Jewish minority—another South Africa—that of the hawks is the squeezing of Israel back down to a twelve-mile-wide coastal strip around Tel Aviv. This is why, ever since the Six-Day War in 1967, they have tried to rub out the so-called Green Line, the 1949 armistice line separating Israel proper from the heart of the Biblical land of Israel on the West Bank, known to them as Judea and Samaria. They have been only partially successful.

What especially troubles them is that the population of the West Bank and Gaza is still more than 90 percent Arab. Unless many of the Jews fleeing Moscow and Baku make their homes across the faded, stubborn Green Line, the hawks will sleep no more soundly than the doves, for they know that if push ever comes to parley, what may tell most is the presence or absence of civilians living on the disputed real estate. International and domestic politics, and the non-ideological temper of most of the newcomers, make it unlikely that many will settle far beyond the Green Line and enhance Israel's chances to annex. It will be remembered that earlier this year, in a perhaps unguarded moment, Shamir said that "in order to absorb a big immigration, a big Israel is needed." It raised a storm here and abroad. Not counting Jerusalem, however, only about 1 percent of the Soviet Jews, so far, have moved across the line.

Most head for Tel Aviv's urban sprawl, where 70 percent of Israel's industry and Jewish population is crammed. This congestion is unhealthy and strategically hazardous. It's sensible of the government, such as it is, to urge the Soviet Jews northward and southward to the Galilee and the Negev Desert, and to offer mortgage and tax breaks. And if there were the money for it, it would be reasonable to invest in better roads to connect such frontier towns as Carmiel and Beersheba to the center of the country. Israeli Arabs are about to outnumber Jews in both regions anyway. The doves mention this, and recall the vision of Ben Gurion, who moved to the desert and prophesied its greening. Most of the doves being patriots, they hope that by spreading out the newcomers, yet confining them within the Green Line, a safe Jewish majority in all parts of Israel proper will be assured, and the option of withdrawing from the occupied territories preserved.

On the other hand, it will take more of the few dollars Israel has left over after financing weapons, the public sector, and political payoffs to disperse the immigrants than to let them settle in the center. For the time being, in all likelihood, most will end up in and around Tel Aviv. But only for the time being. Geopolitics and history aside, much of the adjacent West Bank is the natural growing-space of an increasingly crowded Tel Aviv metropolitan area. It's as if, in Los Angeles, everything east of the Hollywood Freeway was forbidden territory. How long can the barrier hold?

Most Palestinians understand what's happening and are in near despair. There are bitter words being spoken and published in East Jerusalem. You hear about a U.S.-Soviet plot to flood the country with intelligent, ambitious, educated Soviet Jews, who, due to their experiences with socialism and anti-Semitism, will probably vote right-wing. How else to explain the USSR, formerly the Palestinians' great ally, opening its gates, and the United States closing its? Such talk is in the grand Middle Eastern tradition of conspiracy-mongering and self-pity. It betrays the fact that for many on both sides, perhaps for most, the struggle remains a zero-sum game, in which one side's profit must be the other's loss, one side's upswing in morale the other's downer.

Why is history so implacably unfair? The Palestinians, whose brave, bloody uprising is in its twenty-ninth month, are dejected, panicky. Some are emigrating across the river, others to Canada. They ceased believing that the end of the occupation was imminent even before the Soviet Jews started arriving; the Israeli army's patient crackdown saw to that. But now things have gone further. The intifada today consists mainly of Palestinians killing one another, and when speaking with Palestinian intellectuals you rarely hear the Jewish state compared anymore to the Crusader kingdom, which flourished here for a century only to disappear.

This may be progress. To be sure, the Palestinians aren't missing the opportunity to make hay with that Jewish outpost near the Holy Sepulcher. But none believe the scandal will liberate their country for them. Nor do the most informed Palestinians have much confidence that Arafat can stem the Jewish immigration by persuading the Soviets to shut their doors, the Americans to throw theirs wide open, or the East Europeans to cease providing transit facilities. Barring a resumption of the Cold War, such developments aren't in the cards.

The few Palestinian optimists think something will turn up. There'll be peace talks, there'll be elections in the West Bank and Gaza, a permanent line will be drawn at the Hollywood Freeway. The more numerous pessimists contemplate Jerusalem. They watch the Israelis proceeding with their lives somehow, the windsurfers in Tel Aviv and Vaclav Havel getting his picture taken in the rose garden of the Knesset. They joke about perishing with the Jews when Saddam Hussein launches his toys.

EDWARD NORDEN writes frequently from Jerusalem.

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How to win the war on drugs

By Charles Murray

There's something unpleasantly familiar about the debate over the War on Drugs: it bears a strong resemblance to the debate over the war in Vietnam. The sides are divided into hawks who tell us the war is winnable if we just send in a few more divisions, and doves—the legalizers—who think the war shouldn't be fought. The hawks don't want to talk about how much victory will really cost, and the doves don't want to talk about the consequences if their scenarios about the post-surrender future are wrong. Each side includes many who favor their solution less because it promises to work than because of their world view—one that may or may not be relevant. Could it be that we need a different way of looking at the drug problem that yields a different set of solutions?

Let me begin by putting my own biases on the table. In principle, I am a dove. If someone who is high on drugs goes out and robs, rapes, or pillages, he should have the book thrown at him; but it does not follow that the act of taking a drug is in itself something that the government needs to prohibit. I am not persuaded by the Tories who want to use the instruments of the federal government to promote virtue. Nor do I worry about the potential costs of legalization, because I don't accept that drug users who find themselves unable to function have thereby earned a legal claim on their fellow citizens' support.

That being said, I cannot bring myself to support a federal law legalizing drugs right now, as a single, isolated change in social policy. For though I am confident that legalization would work in a society where people are held responsible for the consequences of their actions, that's not the way contemporary America works. In the same inner-city areas where the drug problem is worst, I can too easily neglect my children without being called to account, fail to hold a job and still have food to eat and a place to live, or be a vicious nuisance to my neighbors with impunity. These kinds of behavior, which drug addiction often induces, must be subject to social and economic sanctions if legalization is to work. To legalize drugs in America as of 1990 is to give people the right to be responsible for themselves without also obliging them to do so. It is a dangerous mix. Furthermore, I'm a father, and maybe keeping drugs illegal makes it easier for me to keep my children off drugs. On the drug issue, I'm a libertarian who has been willing to sell out.

The war on drugs has made that compromise much harder to live with. The analogy with Vietnam is again apt: the hawks still like to talk about body counts—the number of pounds of cocaine seized, flashy convictions—instead of telling us what ground has been taken and held. The hawks' arguments are still larded with invective—once again, the doves must be cowards. What the public needs to see is some specific, hardheaded analysis of how we can win this war at an affordable price. And that is what the hawks fail to explain.

The *National Drug Control Strategy* produced by William Bennett's office is a case in point. The *Strategy* is written by people who have done their homework—and it is quite modest in the claims it makes about our experience with interdiction, rehabilitation, education, and law enforcement. Then comes the appendix, presenting its quantified two- and ten-year objectives. The ten-year objectives call for 50 percent reductions in a wide variety of important indicators of drug use—an ambitious set of goals indeed. But the goals have no link with the discussion that preceded them.

Interdiction offers a good example. The depressing facts have been well publicized. In 1975 the U.S. Customs Service seized just 729 pounds of cocaine during the entire year, and the price of a pure gram (in 1987 dollars) was $1,200. In 1987 it seized forty-four *tons* of cocaine, and the price of a pure gram was $143, roughly one-ninth of the price twelve years earlier. From 1986 to 1987 Customs' cocaine seizures increased by a prodigious eighteen tons—after which the typical gram of cocaine on the street was purer than it had been a year earlier and still cost the same.

The authors of the *Strategy* obviously had contemplated these figures, and nowhere in the text did the authors claim that increased interdiction efforts would reduce supply on the street. And yet the ten-year objective for the War on Drugs as stated in the appendix is "a 50 percent reduction in estimated amounts of

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cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and dangerous drugs entering the United States." *How?* Is the goal of a 50 percent reduction just window dressing, complying with a congressional requirement to devise quantified goals? If so, someone should admit that, and then tell us what a reasonable expectation might be. Going by the record so far, the billions being spent on interdiction is money down the drain. (See "Snowed In" by Mark Kleiman, TNR, April 16.)

An even more troubling example of the inconsistency between experience and rhetoric in the War on Drugs involves law enforcement. The *Strategy* argues (correctly, I think) that law enforcement has gotten an unfairly bad rap. A substantial body of evidence confirms that enforcement can raise the monetary costs, the search costs, and the risks of punishment involved in using drugs, and thus discourage drug use. The difficulty lies in trying to apply this evidence to the contemporary drug problem. The only large-scale success in drug control that has been claimed involves the stabilization of the heroin user population in the early 1970s, as described recently by James Q. Wilson in an influential article in *Commentary*. I think Wilson is too quick to credit the effect to drug policy—this was the period when cocaine was the chic new drug among the same urban black population that had formerly used heroin. But even accepting Wilson's account, the chief mechanisms for affecting the heroin trade are said to have been a temporary disruption of supply from Turkey and an increased fear of the health risks. The only evidence that raising the criminal risks for small-time dealers and users works is based on small, highly targeted, extremely resource-intensive efforts, in which success lasts for only a few months after the cleanup ends. This doesn't invalidate the theory. Apply the same pressure everywhere, and maybe we would suppress drug use everywhere. But this is where the gap between the conceivable and the possible becomes an abyss.

A simple exercise will illustrate the nature of the problem. We begin by stipulating that deterrence works if risk is raised sufficiently, and then contemplate the implications of raising that risk. Then we try to plug in some numbers.

According to the 1988 version of the government-sponsored annual survey, 28 million persons used an illicit drug within that year. According to the FBI's figures, there were 839,000 arrests for possession of drugs that year—less than 3 percent of all users after taking multiple arrests of the same person into account. In that same year 317,000 persons were arrested for trafficking or manufacture. No one knows what percentage of all dealers this represents. Now fill in the blanks: What percentage of users and how many dealers must we arrest and meaningfully punish to achieve a major reduction in drug use? I am willing to entertain sophisticated answers, ones that incorporate selective arrest strategies and postulate tipping effects and critical masses. I have no trouble believing, given a sophisticated strategy, that the numbers one ends up with can be quite low and still plausibly produce a deterrent effect. I do, however, have a lot of trouble believing that the numbers can plausibly represent anything less than a few million additional arrests per year.

Suppose that to drive down drug use substantially it would be necessary to arrest and meaningfully sanction 20 percent of the people who used drugs during the past year, plus triple the arrests and sanctions of drug dealers. That would mean 5.6 million arrests of users and 951,000 arrests of dealers. To put it another way, arrests of drug users alone—forget the dealers—would be almost twice the number of 1988 arrests for the nation's murders, rapes, robberies, burglaries, aggravated assaults, larcenies, and auto thefts combined.

Now let's think for a moment about what we will do with these people. One may again be open to all sorts of creative penalties and still be unable to imagine how the nation's police and courts can cope with the increased flow of traffic that an effective War on Drugs would require. On top of that is the hard truth that an effective deterrent strategy will have to mean incarceration for at least some offenders. If for purposes of illustration we assume that the criminal justice system has to impose some sort of incarceration on 5 percent of the arrested users (which means only 1 percent of all the people who have used drugs during 1988—hardly draconian enforcement) and 75 percent of the arrested dealers, that would come out to a bit less than a million people incarcerated for some period of time. Apart from its sheer size, this number represents more than half again the size of the total 1988 national prison population of 627,000—which was of course already far over the rated capacity of the nation's prisons.

The bottom line is self-evidently ridiculous (though it's not so obvious that the percentages that produced it are ridiculous). Suppose, then, that deterrence can be purchased much more cheaply. First we redefine the number of users to include only those who have used drugs during the past month, not the past year. This cuts the target population by almost half, to 14.5 million. Then we assume that all we have to do to achieve a major deterrent effect on drug use is to arrest 5 percent of these recent users and double the current arrests of dealers. Of the persons arrested, we will incarcerate just 2 percent of the arrested users (meaning just one of every 1,000 recent users overall) and 25 percent of the arrested dealers. This is not "strict law enforcement" by any ordinary definition of "strict," and it is not self-evident that such a policy would raise the risks enough to produce deterrence. The point is that even this optimistic scenario implies that the system somehow has to incarcerate almost 173,000 persons in the first year of the policy, plus arrest and meaningfully punish (short of incarceration) another 1.2 million persons. This bottom line too is ridiculous—and deeply unsettling.

I hold no brief for any of these specific numbers. If

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you're a hawk and you don't like them, change them—but at the end of the line, you have to be able to say, "This will plausibly have a major effect on drug use." I am convinced that punishment can deter drug use, but I cannot figure out how that is to be done in an affordable way, and the hawks have done little to make the case.

Such is the box that I find myself in, perhaps in company with some of my readers. One option, and far from the worst one, is to do nothing more ambitious than we were doing before the War on Drugs began. Drug use in some segments of the population has been dropping for several years. Whatever role the government's drug policy had in this (no one knows), the reductions followed a radical shift in the public perception of drugs. Until the late 1970s, cocaine was still literally fashionable (remember the silver coke spoons worn as jewelry?) among many powerful circles in American society. Since then, drugs have become just as unfashionable in the same circles. Because the opinion leaders don't think it's chic anymore, drug use may well continue to decline no matter what we do.

But to do nothing ignores the toll that drugs and our drug policy are taking on our country. Things aren't necessarily getting better for everyone equally. There are signs that the drug problem is on its way to becoming a manageable problem for the upper classes but not for the lower ones, in the same way that cigarette smoking has plunged in the upper classes and remained virtually unchanged among the lower ones. And though it's all very well to say things will heal themselves sometime in the indefinite future, the problems posed right now are severe, and people whose families are at risk need to be able to do something right now.

This brings us to the question that should be the starting point in rethinking the drug problem: *What do we really want to accomplish?* By that, I don't mean the usual goals (e.g., "Reduce by 50 percent the number of adolescents reporting cocaine use in the past month"). Rather, I am asking you to ask yourself what constitutes "success" regarding the drug problem for you and your family. I also ask you to ignore for the moment that you are affluent or an intellectual or otherwise privileged. What is the selfish solution that would work for you, whether or not it rid the entire nation of drugs?

If you put the goal in this parochial way, some of the answers become relatively simple. Suppose that you are a parent. Your most immediate worry is that your child is going to a school where there is a known drug problem. Step back from the issue, quit brooding about societal ills and complex causes of the national drug problem, and think how absurd it is that the school your child attends has a drug problem. It is not hard for teachers and principals to control schools if they have a free hand to oversee, discipline, suspend, and expel, 1950s-style. Are you willing to give that free hand to your child's school? If yes, then it is easy to run schools so that they have no drug problem, or, more accurately, so that it is no worse than the alcohol problem in the typical 1950s high school.

Consider how drastically the problem of devising good policy changes once the statement of what we are trying to accomplish changes. If I am asked, "Do you have an affordable, practical strategy for reducing adolescent drug use nationwide by 50 percent?" my honest answer must be no. But if I am asked, "Do you have an affordable, practical strategy for sending your child to a school where drugs are not a problem?" my answer is emphatically yes.

The most direct way to achieve this is through a generous, unrestricted voucher program that puts into the hands of parents roughly the current per-pupil costs of public education. Give me the money that my school district currently spends per pupil, do the same for every other parent, and let me choose my own school. If I am really afraid of drugs, I will choose a school with zero tolerance for them—expulsion for the first infraction; frequent, unannounced locker checks; and drug-testing. If I am moderately afraid, I will choose a school with a little more relaxed policy. If I am not afraid at all, I will choose a school where the administration cannot touch my child without due process and a search warrant. Wherever I stand on this spectrum, I know how to send my children to a school that is as drug-free as I wish, and I know how to do so without spending any more money on education or the law enforcement system than we currently spend.

Because most parents probably fall in a mainstream "strict" category, a small minority at either end of the spectrum will have to search for other parents who want drug-permissive environments or maximum-security environments. But this is an immeasurable improvement over the current situation, where millions of families cannot find a school run as they wish. What happens to children who have drug problems? Most of the mainstream schools will refuse to admit them, because to do so would be financially ruinous when the parents of the other children hear about it. That's the virtue of the voucher system. On the other hand, schools that specialize in children with drug problems will mushroom when their parents are carrying around vouchers worth three or four thousand dollars.

I began with the school system because it offers a clear example of the policy revisions I have in mind. But the school example can be generalized. Translated into a policy goal for the War on Drugs, it would read like this: *National drug policy should make it possible for people to send their children to schools that are as drug-free as they wish, live in neighborhoods that are as drug-free as they wish, and work in workplaces that are as drug-free as they wish; and this should apply to poor people as well as rich people, blacks as well as whites, people who live in cities as well as people who live in small towns.*

Forget about eradicating drug use everywhere. If you could live in a neighborhood, work at a job, and send your children to schools where drugs weren't a prob-

continued on page 24

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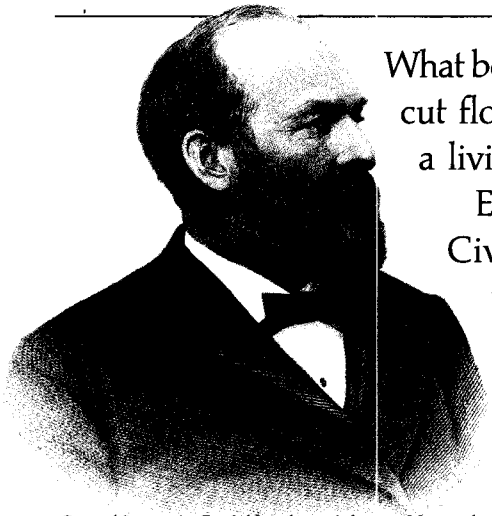
THE MOST ENDURING MONUMENT IS NOT MARBLE, BUT MEMORY.



General James A. Garfield spoke at Arlington National Cemetery on the first national Memorial Day, May 30, 1868. General Ulysses S. Grant also attended.

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Even before the Civil War ended, women in the South had begun placing flowers on soldiers' graves. Confederate and Union both.

Their generosity was impartial. And inspirational.

It moved Francis Miles Finch to write an impassioned poem, titled "The Blue and The Gray," which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in September 1867. Its heartfelt sentiment swept the country.

In town after town, people held commemorations for the war dead.

Since then, the spirit has grown. And the meaning of Memorial Day has grown, too.

Some of the most moving Memorial Day observances are held at Arlington National Cemetery, where the President or his representative places a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

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Back on the first official, national Memorial Day in 1868, main speaker General James A. Garfield paid tribute:

"If silence is ever golden, it must be here beside the graves of fifteen thousand men whose lives were more significant than speech and whose death was a poem the music of which can never be sung."

Our 1990 Memorial Day tribute will

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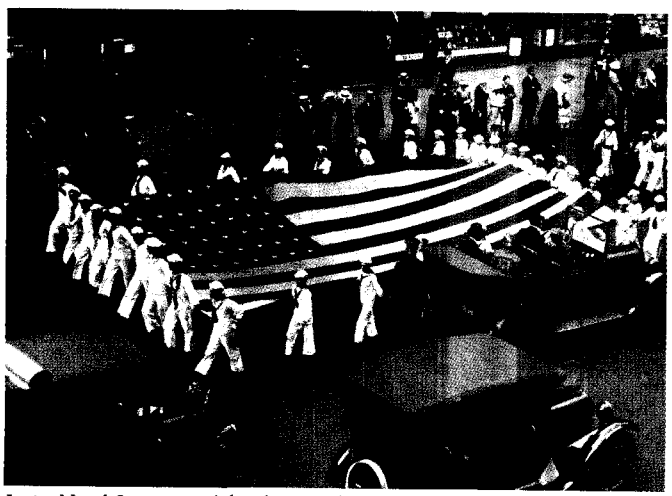

Junior Naval Scouts carried their huge 40- by 60-foot flag in the 1917 Memorial Day parade in New York City.

indeed be musical. But no less sincere than General Garfield's. And through live broadcasts on PBS television and National Public Radio, we will bring it to hundreds of thousands of Americans.

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lem—and if everyone else could too if they wanted—wouldn't that pretty much give you what you want in the war against drugs? Let me indicate a few of the ways in which this kind of thinking could apply to the workplace and the neighborhood as well as to schools.

Regarding the workplace, the policy goal is to give employers broad latitude in enforcing drug rules that make sense for that business, and the premise is that the vast majority of businesses have the enlightened self-interest to do just that. Part of my policy prescription is for government to refrain from passing laws about who can and cannot require drug tests. Any employer can make its preferred drug-testing policy a condition of employment. Another part of my policy prescription is specifically to exempt drugs from the tangle of law that currently permits an employee to bring wrongful-discharge suits against an employer. If we're serious about conducting a war on drugs, let employers discharge employees (if they wish—not compulsorily) who test positive for drug use without having to worry about a lawsuit.

It is expensive to get rid of employees who are functioning satisfactorily. This provides a built-in safeguard against arbitrary and abusive behavior by employers—not perfect protection, but a lot of protection. The clear incentive for employers is to establish a policy that lets them act quickly and inexpensively when an employee is exhibiting signs of drug use, with stricter (and more expensive) checks in place only where drug use could endanger people or property. Drug policy would be a matter for collective bargaining agreement in unionized workplaces, and of collaborative development between employees and employers in non-unionized industries. My proposition is that it is just as unnatural for a business to suffer from a debilitating drug problem as it is for a school. It is easy to avoid, in ways that huge majorities of workers and employers can agree upon, if the government and courts will let those workers and employers decide on the conditions of employment without interference.

The third sphere within which people should be able to live "as drug-free as they wish"—the neighborhood—would seem to be one place where government enforcement of drug laws is essential unless we want to resort to vigilantism. Nonetheless, bear with me while I postpone calling in the cops and propose a few ways in which we might get to the desired end state without them.

One of the greatly maligned forces for social good in this country is landlords. Whatever their faults, landlords have one undoubted virtue: they want responsible tenants. That is, they want tenants who pay their rent on time and don't trash the property. Given their way, they tend to let good tenants be and to evict bad ones, and this is one of the most efficient forms of socialization known to a free society. Actually, the entire process whereby landlords and tenants find each other is much richer in its social functions than this. Entire neighborhoods represent (or once represented) an intricate process whereby that neighborhood evolved a set of norms and attracted a certain kind of person. Expectations were set up on both sides, and money was often a relatively small part of the discriminating value. In Harlem in the 1940s, for example, the difference between the scruffy, hustling blocks and the exactingly neat and orderly working-class blocks was not a vast difference in income among the tenants, but vast differences in norms and values. In the working-class neighborhoods, unless you presented yourself as being a certain kind of person, you weren't going to get in, even if you could pay the rent. In the scruffy neighborhoods, you could get in, but the landlords charged a premium to compensate for the damage they expected you to cause. Economists have technical descriptions for the equilibria that were reached, but the process was not really so different from the way that human beings everywhere have historically tended to stratify themselves not just according to money, but also according to tastes and values.

In the rush to rid society of the socially disapproved reasons for discriminating among applicants, starting with race, we threw out as well all the ways in which landlords performed a neighborhood-formation function. It became almost impossible for a landlord to say, "I'm not going to rent to you because I don't want you living on my property," which is often what neighborhood-forming decisions have to be based on. Then, ensuring that maintaining cohesive neighborhoods in low-income areas became as difficult as possible, we tore down some of those neighborhoods in the name of urban renewal, threw up public housing in the middle of other such neighborhoods, and in a variety of ways made it impossible for neighborhoods to define and defend themselves.

I realize that getting the government out of the landlord-tenant relationship is an impossibility as of 1990, but a few modest changes might make a big difference. I begin from the observation that the defense of the neighborhood against drugs is a problem especially for black Americans living in urban neighborhoods. The other salient fact is that, in a neighborhood that is already predominantly black, it is difficult for a landlord to discriminate by race. He doesn't get that many opportunities. When a landlord arbitrarily turns down one applicant and chooses another, or when he takes the trouble to evict a tenant (eviction, even without government barriers, is expensive), he is probably doing so for reasons that have nothing to do with race, but a lot to do with trying to get good tenants. Why not free up the housing market in black neighborhoods in the same way that the many "enterprise zone" proposals seek to free up business investment?

I cannot speak to the legal difficulties of drafting the legislation, which might be insurmountable, but the objective is clear enough. In the neighborhoods hardest hit by drugs, make it possible once more for landlords to choose among prospective tenants without having to justify their arbitrariness. If they want to impose a no-drugs rule, they may. If they want to

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impose a nobody-who-can't-prove-he-has-a-steady-job rule, they may. If they want to impose a no-welfare-mothers rule, they may. If they don't want to rent to you because they don't like your looks, that's up to them. If a tenant violates the terms of the lease, he may be evicted, without the delays that many large cities now superimpose on the terms of the lease. In short, make it possible to make a buck by renting to responsible low-income people. Apply the same freedom to public housing, giving tenant committees wide discretion to screen new applicants and evict existing tenants.

These reforms will permit the creation of neighborhoods of like-minded people in low-income areas. The reason so few white neighborhoods have open-air drug markets is not because police cruisers prowl the streets, but because, for subtler reasons, it would be very foolish for a dealer to set up shop there. For practical purposes, most white neighborhoods already enjoy the same freedoms to form neighborhoods that I propose giving to black neighborhoods. The crazy-quilt of laws and restrictions sometimes gets in the way of middle-class neighborhoods as well, but not often and usually not onerously. The laws and restrictions are really effective in breaking up neighborhoods only when people are poor and where a large proportion of the people rent rather than own. Absent either of those conditions, the attempts of government to interfere with neighborhoods don't work very well, and one or the other is absent in the vast majority of white neighborhoods. Give hardworking, low-income black people the same freedom to segregate themselves into enclaves, using their nonmonetary assets that landlords prize. The aim is not to put all the drug dealers in jail, but to enable people to construct neighborhoods that drug dealers will avoid.

This brings us to the question of the underclass. What about the mother who doesn't care what school her children attend? What about the pregnant teenager smoking crack who can't even think far enough ahead to worry about what she's doing to her baby? What about the Uzi-toting young male who has grown up thinking that the way to be a man is to blow away anyone who fails to show him the proper respect? How are school vouchers and a free housing market and employer discretion on drug-testing supposed to do anything for the drug problem in their neighborhoods?

The simplest answer is that maybe it won't do anything at all—but so what? I am not proposing utopia, but a system that enables people to live the kind of life they choose to live. My proposition is that the overwhelming majority of Americans, including the overwhelming majority of low-income black Americans who live in the worst of our inner cities, have sensible preferences about their schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, and possess the common sense to act on those preferences if we do nothing except make it easier for them to do what they already want to do. I don't know how to turn around the remaining part of the population, but neither do the social engineers. Let us stop fixating on the worst-of-the-worst part of the problem, begin to recognize how badly we have ignored those who are already trying to do everything right, and do the good that we know how to do by helping those who need only a chance. If the result of implementing these policies is to concentrate the bad apples into a few hyper-violent, antisocial neighborhoods, so be it.

In reality, however, I suspect this scenario is too pessimistic. Over a period of time, it seems more plausible that the use of drugs will shrink even among those people who now have the shortest time horizons, the most neglected socialization, and the fewest links with mainstream society. Drug use will drop for essentially the same reason that so many people reading this article have at one time or another taken some kinds of illegal drugs and then stopped with no trouble. It is the reason drug use is dropping in the middle and upper classes. The most profoundly important truth about drugs is not that drugs are evil but that drugs are unsatisfying.

As matters now stand, the choice perceived by many inner-city youths is limited to the life in their streets, drab and dispiriting, compared with the life they see on their television screens, unimaginably glamorous and unattainable. What they badly need are some options closer to home—a neighborhood a few blocks away, not on the other side of town—where the families have fathers as well as mothers, where the streets aren't strewn with garbage, where the playgrounds are safe from gangs and drug dealers. The people in that nearby neighborhood won't necessarily have much more money, for the kinds of qualities I am talking about do not depend on having much money. They depend on the ability of like-minded people to control and shape their small worlds, Burke's little platoons, to the way of life that they prefer. The price of admission to their worlds is not money, but behavior. I submit that, given this visible alternative, large numbers of the people we currently call the underclass eventually will choose to pay that price in return for admission, for the most basic of reasons: the life that people are living in those other neighborhoods really will be richer, more satisfying, more fun, than the life of a drug addict.

All of the effects I have described would probably work better if legalization were added to the package of reforms, but I won't try to make that case here. My more limited point is that the worst of the drug problem will take care of itself if we let the people who want to avoid drugs do so. Enable them to congregate, dominate their neighborhoods, send their children to the same schools. They will set in motion the forces that will bring over a steady stream of converts. To win the war on drugs, it is not necessary that drug abusers become criminals, only that they be made outcasts. In the natural course of events, schools, employees, and communities will do this. Let them. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Uncivil Wars

There are fashions in slurs. When I was a schoolboy in New York in the 1920s, just at the end of the great wave of immigration to America, most of the slurs were national. Derogatory terms for Swedes, Irishmen, Hungarians, Poles, Germans, and Greeks, among others, were common; and of course each derogated group used slurs about the others. As time moved, as second and third generations were born, national slurring diminished.

Three other derogations that were current then—national, supranational, and racial—still flourish: Italian, Jewish, and black. To these have been added Hispanic slurs. They existed seventy years ago, but they were not nearly as common as they are today, after the postwar influx of Hispanics, particularly Puerto Ricans.

This persistence of racism worries Sidney Lumet, who is Jewish and has been married to a black woman. (Their daughter is in his new film.) What bothers him especially is that racism is now so ingrained that people sometimes don't even know they are thinking and speaking in racist terms. To dramatize this fungoid state of mind, Lumet has made **Q & A** (Tri-Star).

The milieu is the law—the homicide division of the New York district attorney's office and the police department. Lumet himself adapted the screenplay from a novel by a Hispanic judge in New York, Edwin Torres. The plot is, in essence, very familiar, but so much has been done on film and in TV in this milieu that hope for novelty is probably forlorn. All depends on how and why the territory is re-entered. With his concern about racism, Lumet makes a pretty good case.

Once again the basic conflict is between a rogue cop, maniacally homicidal, and honest lawmen (as in *Internal Affairs*, for instance). As usual, the rogue has a long and lauded career, and his challenger—in this case an assistant DA—is a relative newcomer. At the start, the veteran, a detective named Brennan, contrives a setup so that he can conveniently kill a Hispanic drug dealer. A young assistant DA named Reilly is brought in by his office's homicide chief, named Quinn, to sweep the Brennan matter under the carpet. Quinn reminds the young man that Reilly *père* was a splendid cop and that they must now work together to restore the days of New York's Finest.

Obviously the under-the-carpet sweeping isn't going to work, or there would be no picture. Young Reilly uncovers complications. They wind through a network of drug-dealing Hispanics and Mafia connections, and they include a Jewish shyster and a liberal Jewish DA—with the Irish contingent as the background of it all. Racial matters are tangled further when the Hispanic drug overlord turns up with a girlfriend who once had a passionate love affair with young Reilly, an affair that she broke off when she saw his reaction to the discovery that her father was black. Further tangle: two hit men, hired by the overlord, are Cuban Jews. When a Mafia capo hears this, he laughs and says, "What does that mean? No hits on Saturday?"

The very first thing we see in *Q & A* is a traffic light up close, as we look down on a dark street across which Brennan and another man walk toward a Hispanic social club. That shot, helped by the music of Rubén Blades, establishes the tenor of the film immediately: this will be a cunning use of the usual ingredients of crime stories, dark streets as ominous, the mere facts of the city as threats. Lumet is on track, we feel at once, and so is his longtime collaborator, Andrzej Bartkowiak, the cinematographer. Bartkowiak supports the film throughout with wonderful sheets of varied light—in soul-chilling police offices, gay nightclubs, luxe San Juan hotels.

Another element soon looms even larger. The film glides along for its first twenty minutes or so, leaning on—even benefiting by—our familiarity with the genre, as we watch how smoothly the motor of the police-lawyer-criminal machine is slipped into gear. Then we realize that something more than the well-oiled mechanism is holding us. The acting. The film is cast with diamond-point accuracy, and Lumet, always especially good when working with good actors, has brought performances from them that have color and dimension beyond those in the fairly conventional roles themselves.

This is even true to some extent of Timothy Hutton as young Reilly. Hutton is no one's idea of a commanding talent,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Mahabharata. *The actors have been playing for five years in Peter Brook's nine-hour production, and this three-hour version of it is most rewarding because of their ensemble acting. (Reviewed 5/7/90)* **Mama, There's a Man in Your Bed.** *Despite the title, it's a comedy of some charm and much fun. A Parisian CEO and his adventures with the ample black woman who cleans his office. (3/5/90)* **Pretty Woman.** *Julia Roberts, a new star, and Richard Gere, a durable one, in a pleasant confection about an LA hooker and a hotshot financier. Dream along with Julia and Dick. (4/16/90)* **Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!** *Madrid. Pedro Almodóvar. An attractive former mental patient abducts a porno-horror film star whom he adores. Much comedy and more sex. For Almodóvar, audacity is the norm, which is all to the good for us. (5/14/90)* **—SK**

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but Lumet makes the most of his limited force in a role meant to show us how old-time iron will has rusted into mere good intent. Jenny Lumet, the director's daughter, plays Hutton's ex-girlfriend in a repressed-hysteric vein recognizable to every acting student, but she does it effectively enough.

The others are so strong that they give us the extra pleasure, beyond what they say and do, of reveling in main-line American realism. Nick Nolte, sporting a mule-skinner's mustache as Brennan, hulks along like a mad bull, a man who has converted his convictions—about the deterioration of the police and the city—into a rationale for savagery. Armand Assante, as the Hispanic drug king, is superb. Two things have long been clear about Assante: he has outsize talent, and he needs a knowing director. When he doesn't have one, he splatters. Here, helped by Lumet, he portrays a man whose life is bravura and who stars in the show. It's a fine piece of histrionics-as-character.

Patrick O'Neal, the chief DA in the case, is so oily that he seems to pour across the screen. Charles Dutton, now on Broadway in *The Piano Lesson*, plays a detective with a chesty calm that shows he has more resources than the steam-engine ebullience he often delivers on stage. Luiz Guzman, his sidekick, plays his role straight yet also manages to give it the air of a Puerto Rican commedia dell'arte character. Lee Richardson, memorable in a brief appearance as a seasoned reporter in Lumet's *Daniel*, here gives wearied, humane richness to a liberal DA.

Lumet's screenplay is subject to fits of not-quite-fresh dialogue. Also, on some occasions when a bit of vulgarity is in order, he opens the tap, as in a story that Nolte tells near the beginning and in his harassment of a gay hooker. And there is a romantic postlude, after the real ending of the film, that is limp. But most of the screenplay is serviceable. Its best aspect is that not one word is said in it about racism: it just *is* racist, centrally and tangentially. It begins with a murder based on the idea of an inferior race, and as it untangles, it discloses several other kinds of clannishness. There's no rosy promise of improvement at the end.

Lumet has a gift for seeing New York, inside and out—particularly when he has Bartkowiak's camera, as here and in *Serpico* and *Prince of the City*. If you want glossy New York, see Woody Allen's *Manhattan*. If you want the New York that makes people's faces look the way they do in the subway, see Lumet.

The news of Garbo's death had a strange effect on me. When Fredric

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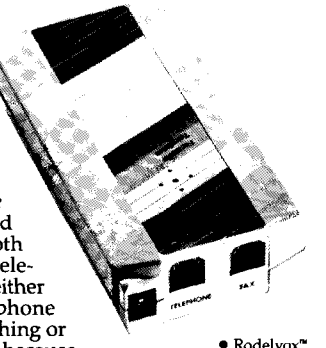

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March or Ingrid Bergman or Henry Fonda died, I felt the loss of a human being who had given me much. But this was not the end of a human being: it was oxymoronic—the death of a myth. A figure who had never been quite real lost her unreal existence. It was as if the newspaper had announced the death of Atalanta or Ariadne. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Lesson of 'The Piano Lesson'

There are reasons why I didn't review the three previous August Wilson productions that moved from the Yale Repertory to Broadway. Lloyd Richards, who directed them all and guided their passage through a variety of resident theaters to New York, succeeded me as Yale's dean and artistic director eleven years ago, and protocol required that I hold my tongue about the progress of my successor. I broke my resolve in an article for *The New York Times* about the role of Yale and other resident theaters in what I viewed as the homogenization of the non-profit stage. I called this process "McTheater"—the use of sequential non-profit institutions as launching pads and tryout franchises for the development of Broadway products and the enrichment of artistic personnel. Since the universally acclaimed Broadway production of **The Piano Lesson** at the Walter Kerr brings this process to some kind of crazy culmination—and raises so many troubling cultural questions—I'm going to break my silence once again.

First, let's take a look at the Wilson phenomenon. *The Piano Lesson* is an overwritten exercise in a conventional style—to my mind, the most poorly composed of Wilson's four produced works. None of the previous plays was major, but they each had occasional firepower, even some poetry lying dormant under the surface of their kitchen-sink productions. I don't find much power or poetry at all in *The Piano Lesson*, though the play has earned Wilson his second Pulitzer Prize and inspired comparisons with O'Neill. (One critic likened him to Shakespeare!) In one sense, the comparison is apt. Like O'Neill, Wilson has epic ambitions, handicapped by repetitiousness, crude plotting, and clumsy structure. But where O'Neill wrote about the human experience in forms that were daring and exploratory, Wilson has thus far limited himself to the black experience in a relatively literalistic style.

Before his death, O'Neill determined to compose a nine-play cycle about the progressive degeneration of the American spirit. (Only *A Touch of the Poet* was completed to his satisfaction.) Wilson's four plays also have a historical plan: each attempts to demonstrate how the acid of racism has eaten away at black aspirations in the various decades of the twentieth century. *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, set in the 1920s, shows how black musicians were prevented from entering the mainstream of the American recording industry. *Fences*, set in the 1950s, shows how black athletes were prevented from participating in major league baseball. *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, set in 1911, shows how blacks were reduced to poverty and desperation by the chain-gang system. And *The Piano Lesson*, set in the 1930s, shows how black ideals were corroded by slavery. Presumably Wilson is preparing to cover at least five more theatrical decades of white culpability and black martyrdom. This single-minded documentation of American racism is a worthy if familiar social agenda, and no enlightened person would deny its premise, but as an onging artistic program it is monotonous, limited, locked in a perception of victimization.

In comparison with the raging polemics of Ed Bullins or Amiri Baraka, Wilson's indictments are relatively mild. His characters usually sit on the edge of the middle class, wearing good suits, inhabiting clean homes. Securely shuttered behind realism's fourth wall, they never come on like menacing street people screaming obscenities or bombarding the audience with such phrases as "black power's gonna get your mama"—which may further explain Wilson's astounding reception. It is comforting to find a black playwright working the mainstream American realist tradition of Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, and the early Arthur Miller, a dignified protest writer capable of discussing the black experience without intimidating the readers of the Home section. Still, enough radical vapor floats over the bourgeois bolsters and upholstered couches to stimulate the guilt glands of liberal white audiences. Unable to reform the past, we sometimes pay for the sins of history and our society through artistic reparations in a cultural equivalent of affirmative action.

On its three-year road to Broadway, *The Piano Lesson* could have benefited from some more honest criticism; in its present form, it represents a step backward. A family drama, like *Fences*, it lacks the interior tension of that work (not to mention the riveting presence of James Earl Jones), and at three hours it's about an hour and a half too long for its subject matter. Buried inside much tedious exposition is a single conflict between Boy Willie and his sister, Berniece, over a carved piano. Boy Willie wants to sell the piano and buy some farmland down South. Berniece wants to keep it as a token of the family heritage (their mother polished it every day for seventeen years). A repetitive series of confrontations between the two adds little about the conflict but a lot more about the symbolic history of the piano. It belonged to Sutter, a slaver owner, who sold members of their family in order to buy the piano for his wife as an anniversary present. Eventually, their father stole it back from Sutter and was later killed in a boxcar fire, while Sutter fell, or was pushed, down a well.

Wilson pounds this symbolic piano a little heavy-handedly. Like Chekhov's cherry orchard, it is intended to reflect the contrasting values of its characters—Berniece (Madame Ranevsky) finds it a symbol of the past while Boy Willie (Lopahin) sees only its material value. But Chekhov's people are a lot more complicated than their attitudes; and because Wilson's images fail to resonate, the play seems like much ado about a piano, extended by superfluous filler from peripheral characters. Frying real food on a real stove, turning on real faucets with real hot-and-cold running water, ironing real shirts on real ironing boards, and flushing real toilets (how David Belasco would have loved this play), these amiable supernumeraries natter incessantly on a variety of irrelevant subjects, occasionally breaking into song and dance. These superfluous riffs are partly intended as comic relief, and *The Piano Lesson* has been praised for its humor. But the domesticated jokes, most of them about watermelons, are about at the level of "The Jeffersons"—even the audience's laughter seemed canned. As for Wilson's highly lauded dialogue, his language here lacks mu-

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sic (except for one potentially strong speech by Boy Willie about his Daddy's hands), usually alternating between the prosaic and the proverbial: "God don' ask what you done. God asks what you gonna do."

What ultimately makes this piano unplayable, however, is the ending, which tacks a supernatural resolution onto an essentially naturalistic anecdote. Sutter's ghost is (inexplicably) a resident in this house, his presence signified from time to time by a lighting special on the stairs. In the final scene, Boy Willie, after numerous efforts to remove the piano (after three hours I was prepared to run on stage and give him a hand), is blown off his feet by a tumultuous blast. He rushes upstairs to do battle with the ghost, now represented through a scrim by flowing, glowing window curtains. Returning, Boy Willie renounces his desire to take the piano from the house, while the supernumeraries laugh and cry, and Berniece praises the Lord. Willie adds: "If you and Maretha don't keep playin' on that piano, me and Sutter both likely to be back." Curtain.

This ending is considerably more forced, though arguably less ludicrous, than the version I saw three years ago at one of the play's numerous station stops. There Willie rushed upstairs as the curtain fell on the illuminated portraits of his slave ancestors in the attic. Either way, the supernatural element is a contrived intrusion. When ghosts begin resolving realistic plots, you can be sure the playwright has failed to master his material, and he has not been helped to shape it by the director. In the hands of his mentor Lloyd Richards, the production manages to exaggerate the flatness and familiarity of the play while submerging whatever could have been distinctive or unique. Instead of urging Wilson to cut out the fat, Richards (to judge from his interview citing Shakespeare's three-hour *Merchant of Venice* as a precedent) apparently encouraged him to treat every line as holy writ.

While the set is crammed with realistic artifacts, the pacing is that of commercial farce. Everyone speaks at top volume with similar rhythms, especially Charles S. Dutton, as Boy Willie, a capable and powerful actor, who bellows his part at the same pitch and tempo throughout the entire play. (Others—S. Epatha Merkerson as Berniece; Rocky Carroll as Boy Willie's friend Lymon; Lou Myers as Boy Willie's uncle Wining Boy—make strong first impressions without being allowed to develop their characters.) There is no silence in this house, no moments to pause, but despite the relentless tumult, the show seems static—much of the dialogue is spoken around a kitchen table. Characters sometimes walk through the invisible wall between the kitchen and the living room, neglecting the doorway arch the designer (E. David Cosier Jr.) provided for passage. And the crude handling of the ghost effects reminded me of the creaky TV soap "Dark Shadows."

August Wilson is still a relatively young man with a genuine, if not yet fully developed, talent. O'Neill's early plays were just as highly praised, though he wrote nothing truly great until the end of his life. Premature acclaim was actually one of the obstacles to his development; only by facing the demons in his heart at the end of his days, a sick, lonely man in a shuttered room, was he able to write with total honesty about his true subject. To judge from *The Piano Lesson*, Wilson is reaching a dead end in his examination of American racism, though another play on the subject (appropriately titled *Two Trains Running*) is now gathering steam at Yale on its way through the regional railroad depots to its final Broadway destination. It will probably be greeted with the same hallelujah chorus as all his other work. But if Wilson wishes to be a truly major playwright, he would be wise to move on from safe, popular sociology and develop the radical poetic strain that now lies dormant in his art. It is not easy to forsake the rewards of society for the rewards of posterity, but the genuine artist accepts no standards low-

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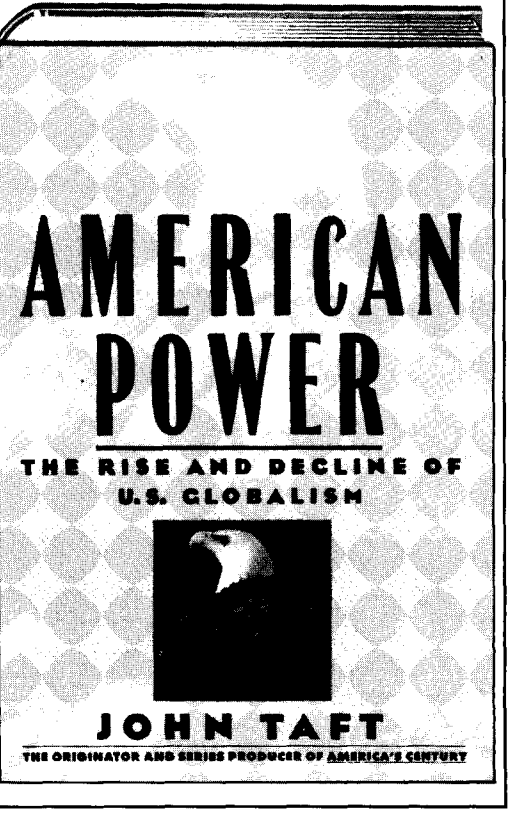

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er than the exacting ones he applies to himself.

Speaking of rewards, I have a last word to say about the way this play has been marketed. In the past, resident theaters were usually content to leave their Broadway-bound shows in the hands of commercial producers, collecting a small percentage of the gross for their home institutions. In fact, in at least one case (*I'm Not Rappaport*), Dan Sullivan returned his director's fee to the Seattle Rep, believing it was the rightful property of the originating theater. (The Washington State Supreme Court, reviewing Sullivan's divorce settlement, agreed with him.) Now look at the producing credits above the title of *The Piano Lesson*:

Lloyd Richards
Yale Repertory Theatre, Center Theatre Group, Ahmanson Theatre, Gordon Davidson
and the Jujamcyn Theatre
with Benjamin Mordecai,
Executive Director
in association with
Eugene O'Neill Center,
Huntington Theatre Company,
Goodman Theatre and Old Globe Theatre
present

I will refrain from commenting on the propriety of non-profit directors drawing artistic fees and perhaps even producers' shares for commercial productions of plays originally funded by subsidized institutions, though the similar involvement of Trevor Nunn with *Cats* and *Les Misérables* caused enough controversy to lead eventually to his resignation from the RSC. I will simply ask how much attention can such an artistic director pay to his own institution when he has spent the last three years staging a single play in six different theaters, before producing it and directing it on Broadway. •

The Compassionate Conservative

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Charity Begins at Home: Generosity and Self-Interest Among the Philanthropic Elite by Teresa Odendahl

(Basic Books, 299 pp., $22.95)

Partners in the Public Service: Government and the Nonprofit Sector in the Welfare State by Lester M. Salamon, J. C. Musselwhite Jr., C. J. De Vita

(Independent Sector and the United Way Institute)

Liberals and Democrats commit a serious error when they accuse conservatives and Republicans of lacking generosity. In fact, generosity has become a central tenet of modern conservatism. In 1992 Mario Cuomo and Jack Kemp will each try to outdo the other as the candidate best representing America's innate benevolence.

The only difference between liberal and conservative forms of generosity, Republicans say, is that the former is coerced. "It's time to reject the notion that advocating government programs is a form of personal charity," said Ronald Reagan in 1984. "Generosity is a reflection of what one does with his or her resources—and not what he or she advocates the government do with everyone's money." The real magnanimity of America is found not in welfare bureaucracies but in "the Knights of Columbus, the Grange, Hadasah, the Disabled American Veterans, the Order of Ahepa, the Business and Professional Women of America, the union hall, the Bible study group," and so on, said George Bush four years later. It is "a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky."

The new compassionate conservative is a far more appealing creature than the old social Darwinist, and fits in better with America's preferred self-image. No nation has more bake sales, marathons, telethons, phone-a-thons, ocean-to-ocean handholdings, potluck church suppers, charity balls, charity auctions, charity walks, and just plain charities than America. Tocqueville noticed the difference 160 years ago. He observed that private generosity came naturally to Americans: "The free institutions which the inhabitants of the United States possess . . . remind every citizen, and in a thousand ways, that he lives in society." In Europe, by contrast, people relied on government for help. "The state almost exclusively undertakes to supply bread to the hungry, assistance and shelter to the sick, work to the idle, and to act as the sole reliever of all kinds of misery."

Relying on the outstretched arms of private generosity, Reagan quietly unstrung many of the government safety nets that had protected Americans, and called on the private sector to do the catching. Bush's "kinder and gentler" rhetoric has advanced essentially the same agenda: cut federal programs for the poor, block new ones, and shift the remaining burden to hard-pressed states and localities that won't be able to do much anyway.

But the new orthodoxy of compassionate conservatism must confront several awkward realities. The first and most obvious is that it hasn't worked. Private benevolence notwithstanding, the number of malnourished, unhealthy, uneducated, and homeless Americans—particularly American children—continues to rise precipitately. More than one out of four American kids under six years old is now growing up in desperate poverty, with little hope of escape—a higher percentage than in eleven other industrialized countries, according to a recent report by the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. America now ranks behind nineteen other nations in its rate of infant mortality, and the number of low-birthweight babies continues to rise. The percentage of women obtaining late or no prenatal care increased twenty percent in the 1980s. And America's poor are becoming steadily poorer. Since 1980 the poorest fifth of the population has lost about six percent of their inflation-adjusted incomes.

To these unassailable facts the compassionate conservative has a ready response, of course: government welfare programs have provided no better relief from poverty, and have had the added pernicious consequence of making their recipients dependent and despondent. This part of the conservative message is often true. But then conservatives conclude that government has no constructive role to play at all. Better to rely, they say, on private programs and incentives—on communities helping communities, on people helping people. It may take time, the compassionate conservative concedes, but America's poor

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will be better off in the end.

But how "private" is private charity anyway? Here the compassionate conservative must confront a second inconvenient reality. Private generosity in America is substantially subsidized by the government—that is, by "coerced" taxpayers. Because charitable contributions are deductible from personal income, the government in effect forfeits (under today's tax law) twenty-eight cents of revenue for every seventy-two cents contributed by the wealthiest among us to the charity of his or her choice. This twenty-eight cents is of course paid by other taxpayers—who thus, in effect, make an involuntary contribution to precisely the same charity.

The public's share of such "private" charitable contributions becomes even larger if you add in life estates, testament trusts, annuity trusts, pooled income funds, gift annuities, deferred gift annuities, lead trusts, fractional interest bequests, and all the other wondrous ways that have been devised for wealthy individuals to avoid or defer taxes until after they (and their spouses) finally enter a realm where they have no need for money. Corporate benevolence is similarly rewarded with tax deductions and deferments. (The latest rage is corporate life insurance, which, upon the death of an executive or director, automatically results in a hefty contribution to whatever charity the executive or director has chosen; insurance premiums along the way are deductible, of course, from corporate income in the year in which they are paid.)

In short, "private" generosity in America is not private at all. Without the significant tax break connected to each of the thousand points of light, we would be in almost total darkness. Teresa Odendahl estimates that wealthy individuals in the top tax bracket gave some $47 billion to charitable causes in 1986 (about half the total $94 billion of charitable gifts that year). With a federal tax rate on top income-earners of fifty percent in 1986, the government's share of the private gifts of wealthy taxpayers thus amounted to about $23.5 billion, or approximately what the federal government spent in 1986 on all health, education, and housing programs directed at the poor.

The compassionate conservative might concede this public aspect of "private" generosity, but argue that private giving is a more efficient means of dispensing public aid to the poor than through large public bureaucracies. The logic would be analogous to arguments used in favor of privatizing other public services, except that in place of the profit motive would be the private incentive to donate one's own money to where it will do the most good. Taxpayers can be better assured that their dollars are deployed wisely when private donors pick up the other portion of the tab than when bureaucrats throw money at whoever yells the loudest. (I confess that I have not yet heard this argument made explicitly, but I am willing to bet my charitable contributions for 1990 that some such rationale will soon emanate from a think tank almost certainly financed by the tax-deductible contributions of Joseph Coors or William Simon.)

Any such justification for why taxpayers ought to subsidize private benevolence depends, of course, on whether the choices actually made by private donors about who deserves to be helped seem appropriate targets of public benevolence. Thus the question: On whom or on what do the thousand points of light actually shine? It is difficult to be sure. The tax returns on which such information are recorded are confidential. The Internal Revenue Service undertakes no surveys of how taxpayers allocate their charitable giving, nor does any other government agency. Many not-for-profit institutions are excused from publishing or even filing annual reports.

Odendahl tries to answer the question by interviewing 140 wealthy benefactors, exploring the foundations, trusts, and other institutional apparatuses established to carry out their magnanimous plans, and poring through whatever studies and surveys are available on the charitable inclinations of America's philanthropic elite. Her interviews take her to palaces of privilege, many of whose downstairs rooms resemble the galleries in the National Gallery of Art but whose inhabitants are typically tucked away in homey upstairs studies more like Norman Rockwell. Her conclusion is that this huge pool of tax-subsidizing benevolence is not being used to alleviate poverty. Most goes to the places where rich people are entertained, inspired, cured, or educated—to art museums, opera houses, theaters, symphony orchestras, ballets, private hospitals (nearly all of whose patients have health insurance), and elite universities.

In 1987, for example, the largest charitable gift from an individual was $25 million, donated to Columbia University by a loyal alumnus named John W. Kluge, whose name will surely adorn a large edifice on Morningside Heights. That same year Henry Kravis, of leveraged-buyout fame, donated $10 million of his hard-earned cash to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which happily agreed to name its new wing after him. The largest donation to health care was an anonymous gift of $15 million to the prestigious Presbyterian Hospital of New York. Paul Mellon donated $10 million to his prep school, Choate Rosemary Hall. And Beryl Buck left her entire $447 million estate to Marin County, California—her former home, whose inhabitants not only live in one of the most beautiful areas of the world but also have among the highest incomes. Mrs. Buck stipulated in her will that the money could only be spent on public improvements within the county.

The most radiant points of light, in other words, tend to fall upon people who are already nicely tanned and oiled. Most of those who benefit from the magnanimity of the rich are themselves privileged. Other taxpayers, often far less well endowed, subsidize such beneficence.

A similar story can be told about private charities in general. Lester Salamon and his colleagues at the Urban Institute have for several years examined non-profit charitable institutions, toward which about a third of all federal spending on social services has been directed. Their findings are consistent with Odendahl's. Less than a third of charitable agencies in the United States direct their efforts at alleviating the problems of the poor. Corporate philanthropy is no better focused on the less fortunate. Etched in the marble walls of the culture palaces of America's major cities are the names of America's largest corporations, which routinely proffer their tax-deductible dollars to any ambitious plan for bringing wealthy people together to hear Brahms or stare at Manets. There under the chandeliers is such beneficence fully appreciated by those with the power and influence to show their appreciation. So too with corporate funding of high culture on PBS, and of libraries, science centers, and professorial chairs at prestigious universities. Appreciative alumni are not infrequently prominent stockholders, directors, and customers.

In recent years America's largest corporations have been sounding the alarm about the nation's fast deteriorating primary and secondary schools. Accordingly, there are now numerous "partnerships" between corporations and inner-city schools, corporate-funded scholarships for poor kids qualified to attend college, and programs through which corporations "adopt" local schools by making conspicuous donations of computers, books, the time of senior employees, and even, occasionally, money. That such eleemosynary activ-

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ities are loudly touted by corporate public-relations staffs should not detract from their worthy effects.

Still, despite the hoopla, corporate donations to education actually slowed during the 1980s, according to "Corporate America in the Classroom," a recent report of the Council on Economic Priorities. Corporate gifts to education had jumped fifteen percent a year, on average, through the 1970s; but 1987's gifts were only 5.1 percent higher than 1986's, and 1988's were a measly 2.4 percent over 1987's (the 1989 results aren't yet in). And only a tiny percentage of these recent educational gifts—no more than 1.5 percent—were directed at primary and secondary schools. The rest went to support higher education.

Here, too, it is necessary to look at the tax side of the ledger, and we find an interesting phenomenon. Corporate gifts are deducted, of course, from the corporations' taxable income, so tax-payers subsidize corporate donations as they do private donations. But many large American corporations have been double-dipping by getting additional tax breaks from state and local officials fearful that the corporation might otherwise uproot itself—and with it, its jobs as well as its local philanthropic activities—and move to another state, or even to another country.

Thus, as corporations conspicuously dispense favors to local schools and charities, they simultaneously (but far more quietly) demand lower taxes. The ironic result is that states and locales are left with less revenue to spend on schools and other community needs. The executives of General Motors, who have been among the loudest to proclaim the need for better schools, have also been among the most relentless pursuers of local tax abatements. As one writer in *The New York Times* recently explained, GM's successful efforts to eliminate its taxes in Tarrytown, New York, where the corporation has had a factory since 1914, reduced local revenues by $2.1 million in 1990, thus forcing the town to lay off scores of teachers.

The magnanimity of Americans is a feature of our national life in which we can take great pride. Americans of all income levels actively participate in charitable work, donating their earnings and volunteering their time. The nation is far better for it. In fact, surveys reveal that lower-income Americans contribute a larger proportion of their earnings to charity than do upper-income Americans.

By drawing a sharp distinction between private and public benevolence, the new conservative dogma seriously distorts our choices for how to express these charitable impulses. The practical alternative is not between voluntary private donations and involuntary transfers of income through government. It is between a publicly subsidized system that is largely unaccountable to the public and a publicly supported system that reflects collective values about who deserves what kind of help. There is a place for both systems, of course. The goal should be to encourage individuals to do whatever they can to help the plight of the less fortunate (but not necessarily to reward them with fat tax breaks for their efforts) while seeking to improve the capacity of government to do its part, carefully and efficiently. In the meantime, let's not be dazzled by a thousand points of artificial light. •

Postmodernism, a Primer

BY TZVETAN TODOROV

Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary by Steven Connor

(Blackwell, 274 pp., $39.95, $14.95 paper)

A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction by Linda Hutcheon

(Routledge, 300 pp., $49.95, $14.95 paper)

Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity by Stephen Toulmin

(Free Press, 228 pp., $22.95)

In the current intellectual debates, there are few questions as vexed as the question of "postmodernity." The confusion can be traced to several causes. First, the word "modern" doesn't have the same range of meaning in English, German, and French (not to speak of other languages), and therefore its "postmodern" extensions diverge as well. Yet the debate about it has always been international; and so in every language the term is employed in a different sense, depending on its application to history, philosophy, or art—and the term is meant to be interdisciplinary.

Moreover, the words "modern" and "postmodern" are often employed as calls to action or as insults, rather than as descriptions, so their content is ambiguous. The university, so fond of all isms, is swallowed up in this breach, churning out tons of books and articles: Steven Connor's book on "postmodernist culture" contains no less than nineteen pages of bibliography on the subject. The effect, all hopes to the contrary, is to make the subject increasingly intangible. One no longer reads Lyotard on Duchamp, or even Jameson on Lyotard on Duchamp, but Connor on Jameson on Lyotard on Duchamp. Connor also treats us to revelations of the following kind: "L. Grossberg, whose work on the sociology of rock music has sometimes evidenced a Jamesonesque distaste for the moral emptiness of mass culture, has recently shown a change of attitude in his work on postmodernist TV."

Some critics add to the obscurity in another way. Since the salient feature of postmodernism is thought to be incoherence, why not use this very word in an incoherent way? Thus the concept becomes as shattered as the activity it attempts to grasp. (Others, it is true, claim this same incoherence for "theory" in general, for the discourse that reigns supreme in the humanities centers of American universities.)

There are also other, more specific features of the debate that contribute to its obscurity. Terms like "modern" or "postmodern," it has often been said, are devoid of content, and designate contemporaneity alone. "Romantic" or

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"Expressionist" are not much more precise, but at least they are an attempt to identify the positive feature of a movement. Still, this vacuity is not without meaning; it expresses an adherence to the idea of progress in its most naive form, one that would like everything coming *after* to be better than everything that came *before*. (It is an idea that postmodernism rejects—but why take offense if it cherishes incoherence?)

Finally, of course, the very project of cataloging singular artists by labels that designate periods is impoverishing, even mutilating. If we say that Proust is modern and Beckett is postmodern, have we advanced our understanding of either? The difficulty is compounded when the label in question is inserted into a systematic history of humanity (or art, or philosophy). All attempts of this sort, beginning with Hegel, who may be the source of the present impasse, are forced to omit certain authors—indeed, certain aspects of the work of all authors—to make them fit the Procrustean bed of their theories, unless one avoids this fix by resorting to the expedients of "anachronism" or "exception." Systematic histories are neither true nor false; they are, in the best case, only "suggestive." This applies equally to theories of the modern and the postmodern. In order to justify or glorify these historic forms, one must declare (like Maurice Blanchot in France, or Clement Greenberg in the United States) that art evolves necessarily toward its own essence, toward a greater purity, or else toward an increasingly complete representation of the world (surrealism is necessarily better than realism). All works that do not fit into the scheme are forgotten.

Faced with such a situation, the first impulse is flatly to renounce the use of terms like "modern" or "postmodern." I have decided not to follow such an impulse (though I may be wrong). Conscious of the dangers lying in wait on every side, I am nonetheless aware of the inconvenience of abandoning abstractions of this sort. There remains, after all, the opposite danger of being reduced to tautology, to the sterile repetition that "Proust is Proust" and "Beckett is Beckett." The scholar who forgets nothing also affirms nothing. Every generalization simplifies, certainly; but meaning can emerge only from selection, and therefore from forgetting. Despite the inanity of the word, categories like "postmodern" can become effective intellectual tools for achieving a greater understanding of works of art and thought—provided that we do not reify them, and are prepared to abandon them immediately after use.

But if we accept them, even on such a conditional basis, we must be more precise about their meaning, without accepting uncritically the pronouncements of the "postmoderns" themselves. Clarification seems to me all the more indispensable because two autonomous distinctions have been, I think, collapsed into one: the distinction between moderns and ultramoderns, and the distinction between modernism and postmodernism.

The first meaning of the word "modern" is philosophical. (I have a certain reluctance to climb into this particular ring with the heavyweights; I fear a knockout punch.) It designates a profound transformation in our way of thinking about the world and man that began in the sixteenth century. Simplifying in the extreme, we can say that the ancients believed in the existence of a natural or divine order to which societies and individuals had to conform. The moderns, by contrast, wished to be autonomous, and as a result human freedom occupies in their work the dominant place previously held by "nature." Individuals are born with equal rights, instead of being subjected to a "natural" hierarchy. The basis of moral judgment is universality rather than conformity to tradition; and values are arrived at through rational discussion, not by an act of faith. The political expression of philosophical modernity is the democratic state. Thus understood, modernity is indeed still an uncompleted project, as Habermas says, and it is desirable for the great majority of us—for all those who do not believe in the virtues of totalitarian utopias or in the conservative nostalgia for social hierarchies and a divine order.

What is known in this same philosophical debate as "postmodern" seems to me more accurately termed "ultramodern." Rather than a radical departure from modernity, this new critical attitude represents the exacerbation of some of modernity's features—an exacerbation that is sometimes taken to the point of reversal, at the price of internal contradictions. I have trouble believing that its adherents are really against ideas of equality and freedom, of universality and rationality (even if Lyotard does prefer Trotsky to Tocqueville). What these thinkers emphasize—the relativity of values, the dispersal and decentering of the subject, the limits of reason, the fragmentation of the world, the breakdown of dogmatic verities and encyclopedic narratives—corresponds rather to what Leo Strauss designated as the third "wave" of modernity, whose most celebrated representative is Nietzsche. Conservative or totalitarian elements may be present, but they are not dominant.

And the same can be said for works of art. A number of those we call "postmodern" should be more rightly designated "ultramodern," that is, pushing one of the tendencies of modernity itself to an extreme. "Autonomy" in art is the rejection of dependence on the external world, therefore of representation. It can take many forms: self-referentiality, a pure play with convention, a valorization of the signifier (I have in mind writers from Mallarmé to the American practitioners of "metafiction"); or again, a denunciation and destruction of conven-

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tion, exemplified in Duchamp as well as in the most recent conceptual art. Brian McHale, in *Postmodernist Fiction*, has suggested that the distinction be defined as an opposition between epistemological questions, as in Joyce or Woolf (How do we know the world?) and ontological questions, as in Robbe-Grillet (What is a world? Does the world exist?). But isn't this, too, a matter of gradation rather than opposition, comparable to the movement from impressionism to abstraction in Monet's *Water Lilies*?

The second debate no longer concerns the moderns but modernism, which is a much narrower notion, and one essentially tied to the history of art. Modernism is not opposed to classicism, but to realism or symbolism—to artistic movements of the nineteenth century that were no less "modern." The spirit of modernism dominated European art from 1910 to 1970 (approximately). Its manifestations are varied, but several features frequently recur: abstraction, or a renunciation of any representation of the concrete forms of the world, hence an intention to be universal; a systematic character, in which the work is the product of a conscious and rational system; a taste for novelty (this modernism shares with all movements of the avant-garde), in which the work affirms its originality and rejects the bond with tradition (no more imitation, either of the world or of the Ancients!); a clean separation between "high art" or "true culture" and "mass" or "popular culture." In certain respects, obviously, modernism resembles some "ultramodern" tendencies.

Thus, in architecture, the constructions of Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe come out of modernism, a style that might be called structural rather than functional. Buildings identical to each other rise up in the four corners of the world, emphasizing simple and symmetrical geometric forms. In painting, modernism generates, above all, nonfigurative and systematic art, from Mondrian to Pollock and Newman. In music, we get dodecaphonic works, as well as those inspired by various mathematical models. In literature, we get Joyce and Pound, but also, in France, experiments like those of Queneau and Perec. A somewhat arbitrary list, of course, but to the point.

The fact that we can isolate modernism in time this way prompts a search for its counterparts in the area of politics, ideology, even economics. Does it correspond to the final phase of industrial capitalism? To the period of the "world wars" (two hot and one cold)? To the era of European totalitarianisms, and utopian projects for a radiant future? Some connections can certainly be established, but they must be handled cautiously. The representatives of modernism have embraced the most varied political credos.

The modernism I have described has been called into question for twenty years now by an artistic movement that for lack of anything better we call "postmodernism." It challenges the principal features of modernism, but without constituting a simple return to premodernism. Postmodernism reintroduces representation where it is appropriate, but it does not aspire to realistic illusion. It renounces systematic and rational composition, yet it does not practice the cult of divine inspiration. It revives the connection with tradition (and therefore with local particularisms), but it does not submit docilely, preferring instead to choose between several traditions or to make an explicit reference to tradition as such, which is anything but a traditional attitude. It plays with forms that originated in popular culture (the detective novel, pop music, poster, graffiti), yet it does not wish to be confused with it.

This contrast is clearest in architecture, and it is no accident that the postmodernist vogue began in this field. Modernist constructions were deemed uninhabitable and they were razed, their place taken by buildings in forms both less predictable and more traditional, better adapted to the varied needs of individuals. In the other arts, the opposition is no longer chronological: Picasso in painting, Stravinsky or Bartók in music, would be typical postmodernists, though all fall squarely in the modernist period. Elsewhere the distinction is not very helpful. I have trouble seeing, for instance, what there is to gain by calling certain films "modern" and others "postmodern."

According to this version of the term, postmodern literary texts would not be those that play with convention or represent only themselves; that is modernism. They would be those that reintroduce representation and the history of the world into their framework, yet without reverting to realism. Some examples would be *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, *Midnight's Children*, *The White Hotel*, but also the Latin American novels of the preceding decades. Linda Hutcheon similarly distinguishes between "ultramoderns" and "postmoderns," but interprets this intrusion of history into the novel as a generalized fictionalization, a dissolving of the real work in textuality—which would, in fact, logically eliminate the distinction. No, the invasion of Prague by Russian tanks, of Bangladesh by the Indian army, and the massacre at Babi Yar do not become fiction in the novels mentioned above, and that is precisely their power. If Rushdie thought that he was creating pure "literature," he must have been persuaded to the contrary after the events surrounding his latest novel; and Kundera, too, after his expulsion from Czechoslovakia.

Stephen Toulmin's *Cosmopolis* represents a new contribution to the debate on modernity, though philosophy is its central concern. Toulmin's thesis is a reconstruction of the history of European thought, as follows. In sixteenth century Europe a new philosophy was born, whose most characteristic representative is Montaigne. Its principal features were an interest in particular subjects (such as war, tyranny, or education); a taste for free, unsystematic reflection; a skepticism with regard to traditional philosophical attitudes that claim to answer humanity's eternal questions; a tolerance for the diversity of opinion. This authentically humanist position was slowly stifled, however, beginning in the seventeenth century, by the rationalism that followed the lead of Descartes. The living word was systematically supplanted by writing; particular questions vanish from the realm of philosophy, which once again favors abstract treatises; the reflections of thinkers are no longer nourished by history and anthropology. In a word, theory replaced practice. This state of affairs reached a sort of peak, according to Toulmin, in the twentieth century, in the period between the world wars, when logical positivism attempted to transform philosophy into an exact science.

Toulmin thinks there is something inadmissible in this tendency toward abstraction, systematization, and eternity. Philosophers are not as independent of their times as they might like to be: the abstraction imposed by Descartes was not unconnected to the particular conditions of his time, just as the tolerance preached by Montaigne was a reaction to the religious wars that ravaged Europe in his era. There is no need, therefore, to maintain the dogma of rationalism, and every reason to revive the spirit of the sixteenth century. This would be the "hidden agenda of modernity" (the subtitle of his book), which has been exemplified in the area of epistemology by Toulmin himself or by Thomas Kuhn; here Toulmin wishes that spirit to be extended to the whole realm of philosophical reflection.

Toulmin's exposition contains a number of interesting observations (on Descartes, or Henry IV), but I am not convinced by his arguments. His reconstruction of the history of philosophy

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looks to me like a survival of Hegelianism: a premodern thesis (Montaigne, Shakespeare, Machiavelli), a modern antithesis (Descartes, Hobbes, Leibnitz—the nasty boys), and a postmodern synthesis (contemporary philosophy). As in other attempts of this sort, simplifications and exceptions abound. Above all, doesn't such a systematic view of the history of ideas contradict his own appeal to abandon the spirit of system?

We should not so blithely conflate rationalism with dogmatism, nor should we forget that unlimited tolerance does not provide a solution to all our problems. Philosophical thought depends, of course, on the conditions of its production (Toulmin writes as if he has himself discovered this dependence, and makes no mention of the Marxist tradition). But these conditions are never sufficient to explain its contents completely. Without freedom, understood as the possibility of wrenching one's mind away from the determinations suffered by the subject, the human being would no longer be what he is.

Still, Toulmin includes a valuable insight not about the contents of philosophical works, but about their style. At one pole are systematic, axiomatic, abstract treatises with pretensions to universality. At the other are personal reflections tied to concrete life situations and individuals, treating particular cases. Consider Machiavelli and Hobbes, in other respects both "modern" (even part of the same "wave" of modernity, if we are to believe Strauss). They are nonetheless opposed to each other, since Machiavelli wrote a commentary on Roman history while Hobbes produced a systematic treatise on the state and the individual. (We see the significance of the opposition between modernism and postmodernism here.) Similarly, Montaigne and Descartes: one recounts his moods, speaks of his sexual experiences, is not concerned about conforming to a pre-established system; the other wants to deduce everything from the cogito and thinks of knowledge on the model of mathematics. Or the first and the second Wittgenstein. Or, we might say more generally, philosophy (for such, indeed, is the dominant current of Western philosophy) and wisdom.

This opposition is timeless. For that reason, the designation "postmodern" for the latter kind of thought seems to me misplaced. (We might substitute for it a word like "practical.") Yet I agree with Toulmin that this current is today coming back in force. The "modernist" period of philosophy—which might be represented by Russell and Whitehead, by the *Tractatus* and the Vienna Circle, and characterized by abstraction, system, novelty, by a total break with "popular philosophy"—appears to be drawing to a close.

More generally, the field of human knowledge in the same period was divided between a philosophy that was concerned only with itself (with its own categories and its own history) and the social sciences that claimed to be "positive," having burned all bridges to metaphysics, ethics, and the subjectivity of the author. The last several decades have seen a revival of political and moral philosophy whose practitioners, rather than trying to write a new *Ethics*, are engaged in reflecting on censorship, abortion, or racism. Is this the direction that philosophy will take? I certainly hope so.

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Notes from Underground

BY RICHARD H. POPKIN

Spinoza and Other Heretics
Vol. I: The Marrano of Reason
Vol. II: The Adventures of Immanence
by Yirmiyahu Yovel

(Princeton University Press, 244 pp. and 255 pp., $24.50 and $29.50, $45 set)

From Christianity to Judaism:
The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro
by Yosef Kaplan

(Oxford University Press, 544 pp., $86)

Tractatus Theologico-Politicus
by Benedict Spinoza
translated by Samuel Shirley

(E. J. Brill, 316 pp., $75)

In the last several decades there has been a growing interest in the extraordinary story of the Marranos, the so-called secret Jews of Spain and Portugal. Victims of forced conversion and pitiless persecution by the Inquisition, they managed to preserve some kind of Jewish identity through many, many generations. Their dedication and their survival have been made into one of the great romances of Jewish history in the modern age. No less stirring is the supposed end of the affair, the counter to this wonderful tale of the durability of the faith: some of the survivors arrived in Amsterdam in the mid-seventeenth century and set up the first genuinely free Jewish community in the Western world, and almost as soon as they were able to flourish as free and practicing Jews, almost as soon as they were free from Inquisitional persecution, these former victims became (or so the usual story goes) narrow-minded defenders of rigid orthodoxy, the persecutors of great modern free spirits like Baruch Spinoza. They expelled him in 1656 and forbade any member of the congregation of Amsterdam to have anything to do with him.

The story covers the period from the end of the fourteenth century in Spain until the middle of the seventeenth century in Holland. The Catholics of Spain had struggled for more than 600 years to reconquer the country from the Moorish invaders. By the late fourteenth century most of the country had been retaken, but the population was still heavily Muslim and Jewish. (Jews had lived in Iberia from very ancient times, before the Christian era, and flourished much of the time under the often tolerant Moorish caliphs.) Beginning in 1391, zealous

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Spanish Christians sought to reconquer the population by forcibly converting them. Mobs led by St. Vincent Ferrar dragged Jews into churches and baptized them against their will. By force and violence, much of the Jewish population (a few hundred thousand people) were converted. These people were called New Christians, to distinguish them from the older Christian population.

Almost immediately, Jewish converts began to rise in the society, especially in the area of endeavor that had previously been barred to them: the Church. Solomon Ha-Levi, the rabbi of Burgos, became Pablo de Santa Maria, the bishop of Burgos. Others became priests and Christian leaders. Old Christians complained that the New Christians were fake Christians, Christian on the outside but secretly Jewish on the inside. They were "*marranos*," a term that is supposed to derive from a slang expression for pig, and from Muhammad's horse, which was neither a horse, nor a bird, nor. . . . Investigations revealed whole monasteries taken over by Marranos, by false Christians who carried on Jewish practices. Important New Christians were found dressing up for the Sabbath, not working on Saturday, not eating pork, and so on. And since a sizable part of the original Jewish population had not been converted, New Christians were found to be involved with (and often related to) non-Christians.

The Old Christian horror at the social and religious scene in Spain a century after the forced conversions led to two climactic developments. The first was the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1484, to ferret out the backsliders and to enforce conformity to the Catholic faith. Backsliders were heretics, from the Christian point of view, unlike unconverted Jews, who could not be bad or false Christians. The Inquisition became convinced that New Christians, being descended from Jews, were bound to be false Christians and secret Jews. Those who adhered to any portion of their heritage had to hide their activities and even their genealogies. The Inquisition quickly became a terror police, seeking evidence of "judaizing" and punishing it severely. People were tortured, forced to confess, fined harshly, exiled, burned at the stake. (The burning of heretics became one of the great public entertainments in Spain.)

The second development was Spain's ridding itself of its non-Christian population. After the conquest of Granada in 1492, the entire territory of Spain was in Christian hands. In the Moorish capital, the Alhambra, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued an order expelling all of the unconverted Jews as of August 1492. (Muslims were expelled a little later.) From then on, it was completely illegal to be a Jew in Spain. Many of the Jews fled to Portugal, where five years later they were trapped by a royal decree forbidding them to remain unconverted and forbidding them to leave the kingdom.

Some of the descendants of these people emerged on the world stage in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. In recent years much has been learned about the history of these Amsterdam Marranos. The French scholar I. S. Révah was a refugee in Lisbon during the Second World War, and there he ferreted histories of various personages out of the almost totally unusable archives of the Portuguese Inquisition. He and the Israeli scholar Haim Beinart greatly enriched our knowledge about what actually happened to these people in Iberia, how they lived, what they did when they escaped to France, Italy, and the Spanish and Dutch Netherlands. Later scholars found important material in the archives of the Amsterdam Synagogue, which were opened to researchers only in 1961. Much recent attention has been given to the great writers of Spain's Golden Age who were Marranos, to the Jewish background of some of the most important Iberian Christian figures of the sixteenth century, and of various Renaissance philosophers who were descendants of New Christians; scholars have sought to show that these people—outcasts from the Christian world but unable to live in a Jewish world—had a distinctive outlook.

In addition, attempts have been made to understand what happened in the great confrontation between the radical Marrano Jewish thinkers Uriel da Costa, Juan de Prado, and Baruch Spinoza and the orthodox community of the Amsterdam Synagogue. The cases of these so-called heretics have been known principally from what was written in the late seventeenth century by Spinoza's defenders. Now, through the work of Yosef Kaplan and Daniel Swetschinski, I think we are getting a more accurate picture that may demystify the famous clash, and explain how the Amsterdam Jewish community, consisting almost entirely of Marranos recently arrived from Iberia, France, or Italy, could have played so great a role in the creation of the modern intellectual world even as it clung to traditions that seem to be conservative or worse.

Kaplan's book is of major importance. He shows from surviving records what Marrano life was like for middle-class Spanish and Portuguese "secret Jews." With amazing detective work, using Inquisitional and other records and the writings of Isaac Orobio de Castro, the leader of a Marrano group, and others, Kaplan has pieced together a portrait of people born on the Spanish-Portuguese border, where they or their parents had fled to avoid persecution, who moved back into Spain in the first decades of the seventeenth century. They had businesses or trades, and enjoyed a degree of protection. Some, like Orobio and Juan de Prado, studied medicine and theology at the Catholic University of Alcala and earned substantial livings as doctors. Outwardly they were indistinguishable from neighbors. But—as they all confessed to their interroga-

The Last of the Medici

Cosimo III adds to his relic collection
a piece of the intestine of St. Francis Xavier,
leaving politics to his sons, first Ferdinando,
already wandering in syphilitic amnesia,
then Gian Gastone, who hires the penniless
to copulate in front of his dinner guests.

Meanwhile, defenseless, swept by the plague,
Florence continues falling to pieces
cornice by cornice, its piazzas empty
and fly-blown by the time the Austrians
take over with fewer than 6,000 troops.

They concede an apartment in the Pitti Palace
to Anna Maria, the Electress Palatine,
childless, the end of the line. Standing immobile
and furious beneath a black canopy in a room
crammed with her family's silver furniture,
she receives a few visitors, including
the English poet Thomas Gray, but refuses
medical advice, unwilling to contemplate dying.

In February, 1743, her physicians manage to deliver
a message that the end is near.
Much older than her 75 years, she's given last rites
as a hurricane flogs the broken back of the city.
Afterward the story spreads that the wind
snatched her up like a leaf and carried her off.

Jonathan Aaron

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tors in the Inquisition—early on they were told by someone, usually a parent or important relative, that they were not Christians; that they believed in the Law of Moses and would only be saved in this belief; that they must carry on, when they were not observed, what Jewish practices and customs they could (such as a "special dinner" every spring, and many, many fasts).

This "Judaism" of early seventeenth-century Spain was what was handed down seven or eight generations after the last legal practice of Judaism had disappeared from Iberia. No rabbis or teachers or practitioners of traditional Judaism were around to instruct these people. Instead, a kind of camaraderie developed: people who were fasting found other people who went for long walks while they, too, were fasting. Some, like Orobio, became central in guiding others, in imparting what they knew of Jewish rituals and prayers.

This secret Judaism is remarkably well documented by Kaplan. His principal source, the records of the Inquisition, may be questioned; people caught by the Inquisition tended to blame their Judaizing on someone either dead or outside of the Spanish world, and so Orobio may have become more important once he escaped, first to Toulouse and finally to Amsterdam, where he became the intellectual giant of the Jewish community. Still, there is much corroboration from testimonies outside of Iberia, from France, Holland, and elsewhere. Kaplan shows how families and friends coped when one of their own was questioned by the Inquisition; how they attempted to establish alibis for each other, bought off witnesses, greased the palms of corrupt Inquisitional types, and used whatever clout they had with people in authority; how people sought by the Inquisition would sneak off to *converso* communities in the south of France (which were nominally Christian), where they had friends or relatives; how some would manage to get Inquisitional sentences and penalties reduced. A sophisticated system of survival was developed that enabled fairly large groups to persevere, to function socially and economically, to pass on their version of Judaism (a quite Christianized version, with the salvation of each individual as its goal) from generation to generation.

Why have traces of this Judaism persisted from the early fifteenth century until the present? Surviving groups have turned up in the twentieth century in Iberia and in the Americas; recently there was excitement about the discovery of the descendants of Marranos in New Mexico. One common answer is that the Marranos had no choice: the Inquisitional universe would not let them assimilate. The Portuguese Inquisition, until the latter part of the eighteenth century, kept records on who was half Jewish, a quarter Jewish, an eighth Jewish, a sixteenth Jewish, and beyond that, part Jewish. There was no process by which one could move from being a Marrano to being an accepted Christian.

The Marrano problem in Spain began in 1391 and intensified after 1492, which led many Spanish Jews to move to Portugal—where they were forcibly converted. This group became the hard core of the Marrano problem. Most of the secret Judaizers we know about descend from this battered Spanish-Portuguese community. They moved back and forth between Spain and Portugal as the situation in one country became better than the other, or they moved to France, where New Christian colonies existed, some of which had royal protection. Few Marranos moved to places where Jews could legally practice their religion, like Italy or the Ottoman Empire. Most of them tried to live their lives in Spanish and Portuguese territory, or in France; that is, in places where they had to be officially Christians. They preferred the dangerous double life of Marranos over the expatriate life in a genuine Jewish community. Though they were determined to cling to their fragmentary Jewishness, they were not prepared to renounce their native land and culture. This led many rabbis outside Iberia to consider the Marranos non-Jews rather than secret Jews.

When the situation became too dangerous, however, they fled. Orobio de Castro, after he was arrested and tortured, knew that the time had come to uproot himself and his family. His college mate Juan de Prado knew, when Orobio and others had been caught, that he, too, had to leave. And Spinoza's parents, having once been caught by the Inquisition, realized that they had to quit Iberia, since twice-convicted Judaizers were sentenced to death. From the mid-sixteenth century onward, Marranos moved in fairly large numbers to the Spanish Netherlands, where they lived and flourished as New Christians far away from centers of Inquisitional activity. Kinship and friendship networks all over Iberia and the Iberian colonies made them able to carry on overseas business, trading, and banking more effectively than many other European merchants of the day.

The Dutch rebellion began in the 1560s as a result of Philip II's attempt to impose Inquisitional authority over the Netherlands. As the Dutch secured control over the northern Netherlands, some Marrano merchants moved there and started the Portuguese Jewish communities in Amsterdam and elsewhere. Soon they had established the first free Jewish community in Europe—so free that it did not live in a ghetto, could carry on its religious and cultural activities without hindrance, and could participate in the economic miracle, in the "embarrassment of riches," of seventeenth-century Holland.

REMBRANDT, *THE SYNAGOGUE*, 1648 (RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM)

The Jewish community of Amsterdam was self-created and self-taught. It was not built upon a previously existing Jewish community. Its best-known rabbis did not have traditional Jewish training. Consider Menasseh ben Israel, renowned in the Christian world as the Jewish philosopher of the age, who came as a teenager to Amsterdam. Born in La Rochelle, France, he was raised in Lisbon. He made his way to Amsterdam, and by eighteen he was teaching Hebrew in a school. He soon became the first Hebrew printer in the Netherlands, and the expert for the Christian world on Jewish subjects. Or consider Saul Levi Mortera, who became the chief rabbi of the Sephardic community. He was a German Jew from Venice and had some early Jewish training, but at thirteen went off to Paris with a famous Marrano doctor, Elijah de Montalto, who was the queen's physician. Mortera was Montalto's secretary at the Louvre until 1616, when the doctor died. He took the body to Holland for burial and stayed to direct Jewish activities. Though Mortera is called

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"a renowned Talmudist" in the Spinoza literature, there is no evidence that he had more than a boy's education in Jewish texts.

Most of the Marranos who came to Amsterdam knew no Hebrew, and little about actual Jewish practices. (There was one early member, though, Abraham Cohen Herrera, who was extremely learned in Jewish matters; he was from Florence, where he learned European philosophy and traditional Judaism, and he was the first person in northern Europe to become familiar with the new kabbalistic theories of Isaac Luria. He appears to have imparted some of his knowledge and some of his mysticism to Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac Aboab, who became chief rabbi much later.) We might say that the Sephardic Jews of Amsterdam knew Judaism as Christians might explain it. And so a school system was created to educate Marranos to be Jews, to give a Jewish education of sorts to children of ex-Marranos. A sort of "Judaism made easy" developed, in which basic practices were established, with a fair amount of leeway for people who found their adoption difficult. Bible study, Jewish history, Jewish answers to Christian arguments and claims, and elementary Hebrew were the principal subjects, which were all taught in Spanish. Talmudic study was the last and most advanced subject, not the core.

Most people who joined the community were businessmen. They did not have much time for study, but they were willing to spend some time learning about Judaism. In some cases, we know that they learned little Hebrew and carried on their Judaism in Spanish. (Menasseh translated prayers and other Jewish materials into Spanish. A Spanish edition of the Mishna was also being prepared in 1661, but it was never published.) Sermons in the synagogue were given in Spanish and Portuguese, dealing principally with moral themes in biblical terms. Two Spanish literary societies were established to keep up Iberian and classical culture.

To understand this extraordinary and controversial community, it is important to note that it was run by its *parnassim*, or directors, who were not the rabbis, but those who hired and fired the rabbis. The large majority of them were businessmen, engaged in international trade. According to the regulations finally worked out by the groups that joined together in 1639, one could not be a *parnas* until one had been a member of the community for three years. (Members were expected to take part in various social activities, such as helping the sick and the poor.) The *parnassim* chose their own successors. This is the group, we are told, that could not put up with those whom Yirmiyahu Yovel calls "Spinoza and other heretics."

The excommunication of Spinoza has often been compared to the condemnation of Galileo. It has been taken as one of the great events that separates enlightened modernity from the dark medieval world. As Spinoza became a major figure in European thought, around the turn of the eighteenth century, his fate in his community became the prism through which enlightened people saw their history. In fact, however, there was trouble in Amsterdam with "freethinkers" as early as 1617, when one David Farrar offended by insisting on rational explanations and interpretations of biblical verses. The Amsterdam community did not know what to do, and dispatched a delegation to Venice to consult with rabbis there; and Mortera, only recently arrived in Amsterdam, was a delegate. In Venice they were given a text of excommunication, the same horrendous text later used against Spinoza. (The ban was a ritual formula; there was nothing personal involved.)

Shortly afterward, the community was beset by the arrival from Portugal of Uriel da Costa, who has been made out to be the precursor of Spinoza. Da Costa almost immediately challenged the community's version of Judaism. Early documents show that he was dissatisfied with normative Judaism, insisting that some of its beliefs and its practices were not justified by the Bible or by his Marrano tradition. He argued for a Judaism that resembled the Judaism of the ancient Sadducees, denying the immortality of the soul and rejecting some of the fundamental practices of the rabbis that were founded on the Oral Law. Da Costa's written work was destroyed, and he was excommunicated. From his autobiography we learn that he was readmitted after recanting his heresies, being physically chastised in the synagogue, forced to lie prone in the doorway while the congregation walked over him. Once reconciled, however, da Costa began the argument again, was excommunicated a second time, and committed suicide.

Da Costa's case came to its grim climax in 1640, when Spinoza was eight years old. It has been taken as proof of the intolerance of the Jewish community of Amsterdam even before Spinoza. But this is a construction after the fact. Da Costa's autobiography did not appear until 1687, and there are reasons to be suspicious of the accuracy of the text. Apart from what is said in his autobiography, we simply do not know why he was excommunicated or what was done to him. Whatever happened to poor da Costa, the significant fact is that he became an important historical figure *after* Spinoza, when he was instantly used to help explain the great philosopher, and to support a grim picture of the Amsterdam Jewish community. Since the end of the seventeenth century, da Costa has been seen as perhaps a vital source of Spinoza's rationalist rejection of Jewish orthodoxy. Sentimental romantic pictures from nineteenth-century Germany show little Spinoza sitting on da Costa's lap, imbibing enlightened views that would liberate him from darkness and superstition. But in the mid-seventeenth century da Costa is never cited by Spinoza or anyone else as a hero, a martyr, or a predecessor.

There was another colorful case of philosophical dissent closer to Spinoza's excommunication in 1656. Carl Gebhardt and I. S. Révah discovered a very important "heretic" involved with Spinoza: Orobio's old classmate from Alcala, Juan de Prado. Prado left Spain in style, as the personal physician of a Spanish bishop being elevated to cardinal in Rome. Then in his forties, he took his family to Italy, and later to Hamburg, where he stayed with the wealthy Jewish banker Diego Teixera. Next he moved to Amsterdam, where he became an impoverished member of the Jewish community and a participant in the intellectual milieu of Christian scholars at the Dutch and Belgian universities. He came to know Spinoza in 1655, and they became central figures in a budding critical rebellion in the synagogue.

Orobio said that Prado was already skeptical of religion, Jewish or Christian, in Spain. In Amsterdam, in any case, Prado expressed his criticism, using material from the great heretical work *Men Before Adam*, written in 1655 by the French Marrano Isaac La Peyrère, who challenged the historicity and the accuracy of the biblical text, questioned whether Moses was the author of its first five books, and insisted that the world was much older than biblical chronology suggested. All that we know about Prado's views comes from Orobio's replies to him, and from two reports in the Inquisition files about a meeting in 1659 of a theological discussion club, at which both Spinoza and Prado were present and apparently had similar opinions. Yovel tries to denigrate Prado's thought in favor of Spinoza's originality and uniqueness. The truth is that we do not have enough information to tell if Prado had a fully developed theory of religion, and if his

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views resembled the young Spinoza's.

We do know that Prado and Spinoza were both challenged in the summer of 1656, and ordered to recant. Prado did; Spinoza did not. At that point in the synagogue records, Spinoza's excommunication was officially entered, weeks after it was declared. Prado fought on for a couple of years, a Marrano among the Jews, trying to convince Mortera of his critical arguments. Finally he, too, was excommunicated, and went to Belgium, where he became a New Christian again. In 1656 Prado was obviously much more important than Spinoza. He was an established scholar, consulted by professors at Utrecht and Leiden. He claimed he could have been a professor at either institution if he had been willing to convert. Spinoza, by contrast, was a twenty-three-year-old businessman.

On July 27, 1656, Rabbi Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, on behalf of the Amsterdam congregation, announced in the synagogue that

> having long known of the evil opinions and acts of Baruch de Spinoza, they [the congregation officials] have endeavored, by various means and promises, to turn him from his evil ways. But having failed to make him mend his wicked ways, and, on the contrary, daily receiving more and serious information about the abominable heresies which he practiced and taught and about his monstrous deeds . . . they became convinced of the truth of this matter; and after all of this has been investigated in the presence of the honorable rabbis, they have decided, with their consent, that the said Espinoza should be excommunicated and expelled from the people of Israel.

Next the rabbi declared:

> By decree of the angels and by command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse, and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of the entire holy congregation, and in front of these holy scrolls with the 613 precepts which are written therein. . . . Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down and cursed be he when he rises up. Cursed be he when he goes out and cursed be he when he comes in . . . all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven . . .

After all of this, more practically, the congregants were told that "no one should communicate with him neither in writing nor accord him any favor nor stay with him under the same roof nor within four cubits in his vicinity; nor shall he read any treatise composed or written by him."

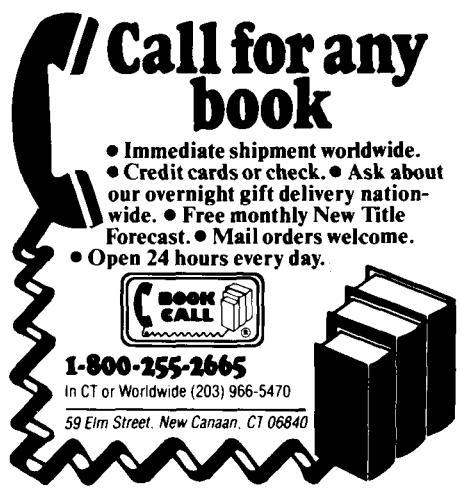
Despite the rabbinical bombast, it was never specified what abominable heresies Spinoza practiced or taught, and what his monstrous deeds were. There has been much speculation, of course; but after all these years we must admit, I think, that we just do not know exactly why Spinoza was excommunicated.

According to the Spinoza myth, he was excommunicated by pre-enlightenment fiends merely for thinking for himself. The early biographies by Johann Colerus and Jean-Maximillien Lucas present Spinoza as the hero, and the Jewish community, led by Mortera, as the villain. Spinoza himself, in the papers that remain, does not discuss the excommunication. (He seems not to have been present at the event.) Colerus, around 1700, tried to find out what actually took place at the excommunication, but found nobody who was there, nobody who knew; and so he consulted a Christian textbook about Judaism to find out what a Jewish excommunication would have been like. (The formulation quoted above appears only in the record book of the Amsterdam Synagogue, and was not available until fairly recently.)

It has also been presumed that a 200-page document, in Spanish, that was in Spinoza's possession when he died in 1677 was his answer to the synagogue. Some have surmised that this was an early draft of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of 1670, which contained his systematic critique of Judaism and biblical religion. In the *Tractatus*, Spinoza propounded his view that the Bible was a historical document, not a supernatural one, written by the ancient Hebrews about their particular circumstances; and that all the events of the world are necessary, and that miracles are impossible. Yovel claims that the rabbis had a copy of the Spanish manuscript of this work. It is a claim for which there is no evidence. We have no information about the contents of that document.

Nor is anything said about Spinoza in the synagogue's records after the excommunication. This has sometimes been taken as evidence that the community hated him so much that it expunged all references to him. But perhaps the event, so epochal from the standpoint of Prado and Spinoza and rationalists to come, was a non-event from the standpoint of the community. Perhaps they did not mention him because they did not think he was worth mentioning. Orobio is the only one in the Jewish community who took the trouble to read Spinoza's work and to refute it.

The synagogue may have been preoccupied with more pressing problems. There was an immediate need to resettle hundreds of Jewish colonists from Brazil, who fled when the Portuguese reconquered the country from the Dutch. In 1656, as Kaplan's recent research shows, there was a great influx of very poor Ashkenazi refugees into Amsterdam after the Russians captured Vilna. Lithuanian Jews fled across northern Germany, and many went as far as Amsterdam, where they were grudgingly supported by the synagogue. Their number became so great that major efforts had to be launched to resettle them in German cities. In the two weeks before Spinoza's excommunication, records show that the congregation's leaders were engaged in obtaining boats to take hundreds of Ashkenazi refugees from Amsterdam to places in Germany. The fact that much money had to be paid for boats just eight days before Spinoza's excommunication suggests that not too much attention may have been paid to what a brash young man in his twenties had to say about the methods of biblical exegesis. First things first.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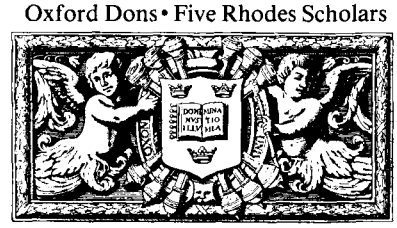

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There was also an important change in the rabbinate in 1655-56. Menasseh ben Israel, the most famous teacher and scholar in the group, went to England to negotiate with Oliver Cromwell for the readmission of the Jews. The most cosmopolitan intellectual in the community, he was replaced by the mystic Isaac Aboab. Aboab and the merchant Abraham Pereyra set up a yeshiva in late 1655. Evidence of Spinoza's greatly reduced financial contributions suggests that he became disenchanted with the community at just this time. The change of rabbis and the new intellectual atmosphere may have been a reason, as well as his first contact with the heretical ideas of La Peyrère and the views of various radical Protestant thinkers.

The Spinoza literature makes it appear that it was the rabbis, especially Mortera, who were out to get Spinoza, because of his independent thinking. But in fact it was the lay leaders who expelled him, with the concurrence and the cooperation of the rabbis. In the synagogue records, the signature of Baron Don Antonio (Isaac Israel) Lopes Suasso appears just above the decree of excommunication. He joined the synagogue in 1654 or 1655, paying the largest contribution of any member; and he served as secretary-treasurer in 1655 and 1656, the period in which Spinoza's rebellion and ex-communication took place. Born and educated in Bordeaux as a Christian, he moved from Belgium to Amsterdam in 1653, where he became, for the first time in his life, a public Jew, probably for business reasons. (A Portuguese Catholic could not function in Holland.) Would this merchant-adventurer have cared about what Spinoza or Prado thought? In the synagogue he functioned as what we would call a big shot, but he took no known part in its intellectual or theological activities. In 1671 he walked out over a business matter and did not return.

This man and his business friends did not care about ideological matters, but they did require the synagogue as a business club, and as a center of family and community activities. They were willing to put lots of money into it, and they did not need raucous rebels or poor Ashkenazim causing disturbances. Perhaps the excommunication of Spinoza was a quick way of ridding themselves of a pest. Prado and Spinoza turn up with great news, that some of what was accepted by Jews is false or dubious. In the situation of 1655-56, who would care? Probably the rabbis Mortera and Aboab, who may have seen the heretical implications of what the rebels were saying. But the leading congregants wanted peace in the synagogue. We know that they tried to buy Prado off, even offering to pay his way to some faraway land (America?). Spinoza said that they offered him a large bribe to stay in the community and be discreet about his views and his behavior.

If the synagogue's leaders did not care about Spinoza's views, did Spinoza really care about theirs? Perhaps not. There were almost 300 persons excommunicated from the Amsterdam Synagogue in the seventeenth century, and Spinoza is unique among them: he is the only one we know who made no effort to have the ban revoked or to rejoin the community. Unlike da Costa and Prado, Spinoza (as far as we know) quietly and quickly started a new life among the non-denominational Christians, even before the official excommunication. In his purported comments to his last landlord, he did not even mention the excommunication. He gave as his reason for leaving the community that somebody tried to knife him outside the synagogue. (He kept the coat with the knife hole for the rest of his life.) And in his comments about Jews and Judaism in the *Tractatus* and in his letters, there is no expression of sadness that he had been cut off from his fellow Jews. (He actually had at least one Jewish friend later, the libertine Dr. Henri Morelli.) The ease with which Spinoza passed into the world of the radical Christian Millenarians suggests that he had prepared the way beforehand. He was immediately taken in by the Collegiants and the Quakers.

It is generally assumed that the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* was Spinoza's retort to Judaism, and to the rabbis who had condemned him. But in the excellent new English translation by Samuel Shirley, the first in a century, there is a fine introduction by Brad Gregory setting Spinoza partly in the Christian Millenarian context of the time; and I think it should provoke a reconsideration of the notion that the intellectual context of Spinoza's work remained fully Jewish. For example: in the *Tractatus* Spinoza painstakingly discussed the ancient Hebrew theocracy and the Election of the Hebrews in the Bible, to show that all this had no relevance in his own time. Now, who was trying to re-establish the Hebrew theocracy in the mid-seventeenth century, and who was claiming to be the Elect Nation?

Not the Jews of Holland, who saw themselves as lucky residents of a state that allowed them to take part in world commerce. The Millenarian Christians of Holland, however, did have ancient Israel on the brain. Some learned Christian theologians saw the independent Dutch republic as the New Israel, or wanted to make the Dutch Republic into a modern theocracy patterned on the ancient one. Similarly, many Puritan theologians saw the republic in England as a nation Holy and Elect, or were trying to make it so. The clear and present danger of the day was not the attempt by Jews to re-establish their ancient kingdom, but the attempt by Christian Millenarians to use the biblical precedent as a political program.

Spinoza's separation of the events of 3,000 years ago from the events of his own time may have been directed at these enthusiastic Millenarians, who were creating mayhem by trying to establish God's Kingdom on Earth in England and man's intolerance in the Netherlands. In attacking any supernatural basis for knowledge or action, Spinoza was effectively challenging the zealous Christian view of what was going on: insofar as Christian Millenarianism is based on aspects of the traditional Jewish worldview, criticizing the one involves criticizing the other. Spinoza appears to have gotten on well with the spirituality of Millenarianism, but not with its activism. He stayed in close contact with some of the Collegiants and other unaffiliated spiritual Christians throughout his life.

The truth is that Jews who were horrified by Spinoza's views about the status of the Bible and about the possibility of Providence in human history reacted much later than Christians. The *Tractatus* was read by Christian theologians and by freethinkers long before there was much Jewish reading of the book. The work was translated into French and English in the late seventeenth century and was disseminated by radical Christian thinkers. Responses to it were written by Christian theologians, not by rabbis. (Orobio is the only Jewish exception.) The *Tractatus* affected the European Enlightenment long before it affected Jewish thought late in the eighteenth century.

If Spinoza's work was indeed so effectively separated from the Jewish world of his time, can his philosophy be called an outcome of the Marrano experience? Spinoza was not a Marrano, he was a child of Marranos. He was a member of the first generation of free Jews born in Amsterdam, the first generation of Jews who did not have to hide their views. But this was a world whose heroes were Marranos, and Yovel claims that Spinoza was a special kind of Marrano: a "Marrano of reason." Yovel's book attracted a lot of attention in its Hebrew original. It borrows very heavily from other people's research. It is, in its way, a tour de force, which joins recent studies about the Am-

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sterdam intellectual world, recent studies by Hispanists of the Marrano elements in Spanish classical literature, and a sophisticated, though debatable, interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy, according to which he was a purely naturalistic thinker. (Yovel's second volume compares Spinoza rather mechanically to Kant, Hegel, Heine, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud.)

Spinoza was born and raised in Amsterdam, where it was no longer necessary to adopt Marrano intellectual habits. Yovel claims that Spinoza retained much of the Marrano view, and applied it to become the first secular philosopher, the first thinker who believed neither in Judaism nor in Christianity, but in the ability of reason to explain everything in naturalistic terms. It is true, of course, that some great shift occurred between 1650-1700 in European theories about God and the world, and about the relationship of the Bible to human history and action; and that Spinoza, no matter how he saw himself, certainly became the theoretician for the new "enlightened" age of secularism. But Yovel's characterization of Spinoza's thought is not new, and sheds no new light. Three centuries ago Pierre Bayle said that Spinoza was the first to reduce atheism to a system.

Yovel also contends that Spinoza was the first secular Jew: "Spinoza took the first step in the eventual secularization of Jewish life." This means Spinoza was, in some meaningful way, both a secularist *and* a Jew. This notion is also a cliché, and it is based on only a few morsels of evidence. The argument that Spinoza remained a Jew runs like this: he said that anti-Semitism is what kept Judaism alive; some anti-Semites stressed that he was a Jew; therefore he remained a Jew because of anti-Semitism, even if he was a secular man. In fact, we do not know whether Spinoza considered himself a Jew after 1656. His subsequent philosophy included elements from his Jewish background—though its precise debt to the kabbalistic neo-Platonism of Abraham Herrera and Leone Ebreo, and to the philosophical traditions of Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Ezra, has not yet been fully worked out—and he remained interested enough to write a Hebrew grammar. His radical pantheism may have owed much to Jewish sources, but his naturalized Cartesianism did not.

Yovel sets his interpretation of Spinoza in the Marrano experience, in Marrano points of view. In this he follows an old tradition of Spinoza scholarship. To indicate the special character of Spinoza's outlook, for example, Yovel contrasts it with the classic Spanish play, the *Celestina* (something I suggested doing over fifteen years ago). The *Celestina* was written at the end of the fifteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century it was discovered that its author, Fernando Rojas, was a New Christian, from a family that suffered much persecution. Steven Gilman, followed by other Spanish scholars, has discussed the work as a disguised statement of the plight of the *conversos*, and an advocacy of a Marrano's disillusioned interpretation of the nature of the world. Yovel builds on these commentators and makes the play into the great statement of a pagan denial of a Judeo-Christian world.

Now, ever since the great Spanish historian Americo Castro wrote *The Structure of Spanish History*, Spanish literature of the Golden Age has often been read in terms of the suppression of the Jews and the Moors. It is to be expected that literature would reflect its situation; and in view of the danger of stating one's opposition to the Inquisition openly, the criticism in the work would have to be oblique and cryptic. But discovering the "hidden" message in such works is a delicate and difficult matter. Yovel's grandiose reading, offered with sweeping unsupported claims (which he promises to justify in a future study of the play) seems to make too much of what is essentially a comic farce.

Yovel seems to think that there was *a* Marrano point of view. But the research of Kaplan and others indicates that there was no such thing. There was, instead, a wide variety of Marrano points of view; and outlooks, of course, changed over time. How the world looked to those suppressed right after the expulsion of the unconverted Jews in 1492, and how it looked a century later, and how it looked to ex-Marranos breathing the free air of the Netherlands, must have been different.

How each of these beleaguered Jews survived differed from person to person and from time to time. Some survived by internalizing all signs of belief, some by shedding all dangerous beliefs. Some survived by finding niches in the social and economic world in which they could function without their private worlds being discovered or endangered. Some probably moved from skepticism about Inquisitional Christianity to skepticism about Christianity itself, and perhaps even to skepticism about religion in general. Others probably found solace and sustenance in some kind of internal mysticism. Some, as Kaplan points out, developed a spiritualized Judaism: "Since, as crypto-Jews, they had been precluded from sharing a mode of life guided by Jewish Law, many of them came to feel that an interior, emotionally-felt identity with the Jewish heritage was more important than the actual implementation of the commandments." (This foreshadowed modern Reform Judaism.) And a very large number of people over the centuries were absorbed into the prevailing oppressive culture. As Kaplan points out, the wonder is not that so many Marranos became ordinary Christians, but that so many became active members of Jewish communities.

Yovel argues that Spinoza had to disguise his real thoughts in Marrano-like fashion, that he had to express himself cryptically, lest he appear too shocking. If this was so, it didn't work. His own contemporaries saw the originality, and the danger, of his thought. We are told in a report of a conversation with Spinoza that he was more shocking in his talk than in his writings. His French libertine friends certainly got his pantheistic and naturalistic message, and his rejection of Judaism and Christianity as revealed religions. They did not have to decode what he said.

Still, there is a deeper truth in this way of reading Marrano writings. Leo Strauss insisted that we read between the lines, because of the ineluctable link between what he called "persecution and the art of writing." Marranos in Iberia and writers in Stalinist Russia (though not all of them) learned only too quickly to get their thoughts across within the limits of the acceptable. The possibilities of state control in the late twentieth century have engendered many kinds of double living and cryptic expression. Even in the United States, people not part of the social majority have problems, though they are not as severe in their consequences. If we, I mean the members of a minority, gain understanding or chutzpah, we realize that as outsiders we see things that insiders would never notice.

If we are not completely homogenized members of the dominant culture, some measure of Marrano activity is forced upon us all. In Iberia, in Europe, in Amsterdam, the Marranos helped to shape the modern outlook. And they became not just voices crying in the wilderness, but voices of a different world, a world of uprooted people cut off from their heritage. For all their suffering, it was the historical privilege of the Marranos to throw light on the character of majority life, and in so doing to help themselves and the society in general.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Neoconfab

HAVING MISSED WHAT PROBABLY should have been but possibly wasn't the farewell tour of the Rolling Stones, I was not about to make the same mistake with the neoconservatives. So I hastened to the Omni Shoreham Hotel, to attend what probably should have been but possibly wasn't the farewell conference of the Committee for the Free World. Atmosphere: surprisingly mellow, faintly melancholic, mildly chummy. Attendees: a couple of hundred "New Class" types—editors, polemicists, academics, and think tankers, most of them ex-radicals, ex-socialists, ex-liberals, ex-bohemians and/or ex-Democrats, some of them ex-Reagan administration officials lately eased out by the pragmatic Bushies. Explicit topic: "Does the 'West' Still Exist?"—a characteristically gloomy way of putting a question most people would phrase, "Does the 'East' Still Exist?" Implicit topic: What are neoconservatives supposed to do now?

THESE ARE, AS ALWAYS, CONTENtious times for neocons. Some of them revel in the collapse of Soviet power, while others denounce glasnost et al. as a ruse designed to make Uncle Sam drop his guard. Midge Decter, executive director of the Committee for the Free World, is of the former persuasion (though she still thinks Gorbachev is nothin' but a damn Communist). But in a pre-conference fundraising letter, she argued that even though Bolshevism is kaput the Committee will always have a role—"as long as the media demoralize us with their smug, lazy, ignorant misreporting; as long as the schools miseducate our children on the racist assumption that real standards of achievement are inherently unfair to expect of minority children; as long as the universities are permitted to defraud their hard-pressed consumers by purveying anti-intellectual formulas packaged as learning; as long as the arts and publishing industries continue to demand the kind of conformity of which theocracies only dream. . ." Hang on—aren't Americans who endorse this sweeping anathema thereby joining what the letter elsewhere calls a "chorus of disaffection toward their own country and its political and social institutions"? But as true aficionados of neocon rhetoric are aware, condemning American business or American military interventions is "anti-American," whereas wholesale vilification of American newspapers, American schools, American universities, American movies, American museums, and American book publishers is the least that can be expected of defenders of American values. (By the way, I do not use the term "neocon" in an unfriendly spirit, at least not very. Like Quakers, cops, suffragists, contras, and freaks, the neocons have taken an appellation tailored to discomfort them, slipped it on, and worn it till it's as snug as an old leather jacket.)

NOBODY COVERED THIS MEETING. To put it another way, *The Washington Times* covered it. No newspaper not owned by a tax-evading Korean messiah did the same. Yet surely it was news that the neocons, who after all have been an important intellectual force for well over a decade, were, as the *Washtimes* reported on page one, riven by "internal strife," that they "showed deep divisions," that they were "at odds." Who, for instance? Well, Norman Podhoretz and Jeane Kirkpatrick. He said the West's response to the Lithuanian crisis is "something of which we all should be ashamed." She said, "I am not ashamed of the West because of the decision on Lithuania." He said the Russians will never let the Lithuanians go unless the United States makes them. She said that even if the United States does nothing, "the Baltic states will have their independence within three years." He said, "Gorbachev's smile is the most powerful weapon the Soviets have," because this smile is beguiling the United States into taking its troops and missiles out of Europe. She said, "It's not Gorbachev's smile but his restraint in the use of force in Eastern Europe." Who else? Frank Gaffney and Irving Kristol. Gaffney, who used to be Richard Perle's Richard Perle and now runs an ultra-hawkish think tank, said that owing to "the Machiavellian schemes of Gorbachev," the Soviets "are closer to achieving their strategic goals than at any time since World War II"—goals like loosening NATO, getting credits from the West, and "maintaining buffer zones." Kristol, editor of *The Public Interest* (the leading neocon domestic policy magazine) and publisher of *The National Interest* (the leading neocon foreign policy magazine), said, "Listening to Frank Gaffney, I thought I was listening to someone in a time warp." Gaffney said Kristol had a "passive and appeasing point of view." Kristol said, "That's not the world as I see it." Biff! Pow! Blam!

I EXAGGERATE, OF COURSE. MOST of the time people just agreed with each other. In truth the gap between neocon and neocon is small compared with the gap between neoconservatives and regular, or "paleo," conservatives. This was illustrated by the very timing of the conference, which was scheduled to conflict with a huge, and long-planned, march on Washington by pro-life groups. While the masses massed on the Mall, the neocons sat in the Hampton Room listening to a discussion about Western culture. The Rev. Richard John Neuhaus used some of his time to praise the marchers and denounce abortion. The audience reaction was a tie. One person clapped. One person hissed. Otherwise, embarrassed silence.

I HAD LONG BEEN CURIOUS TO LAY eyes upon Jean-François Revel, who was the third panelist in the Podhoretz-Kirkpatrick panel. Having pictured him as the vulpine type, I was surprised to see that he looks like Erich von Stroheim, only more so. Revel said that the Soviet Union's economic collapse is what keeps it from using force, though I'm pretty sure I read an article by him not long ago that said economic troubles would make the Russians more aggressive. Revel is the author of *How Democracies Perish*, which, according to Peggy Noonan in her memoir of the Reagan White House, "everyone" read. That book argued that democracies are at a possibly fatal disadvantage in the great global struggle because they allow peace movements and radicals to do their worst, while totalitarian countries enjoy corresponding advantages. I was eager to ask Revel if recent events had not thrown doubt on this thesis. At the question period I waited in line behind the floor microphone. Unfortunately, the moment I got to the front of the queue was the exact moment the session was declared to be "out of time."

THE DISCUSSION ON WESTERN culture took up the troubling question of why Vaclav Havel has a picture of John Lennon on the wall of his apartment. Hilton Kramer, editor of *The New Criterion*, bemoaned the fact that the East European dissidents liked Allen Ginsberg and the Beatles. John O'Sullivan, editor of *National Review*, said this was only because the authorities had censored them, though he didn't trouble to say *why* they had done so. "Is rock'n'roll always bad?" asked a questioner from the floor. Neuhaus said he didn't know because he wasn't masochistic enough to listen to the stuff. O'Sullivan said he disliked all popular music after Cole Porter. Kramer suggested that Lennon and his friends "used to sing the praises of Ho Chi Minh." (Untrue, by the way.) Oh, well. Western civ may be as decadent as Kramer says, but at least he didn't blame it on the Stones. He blamed it on the Beatles.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

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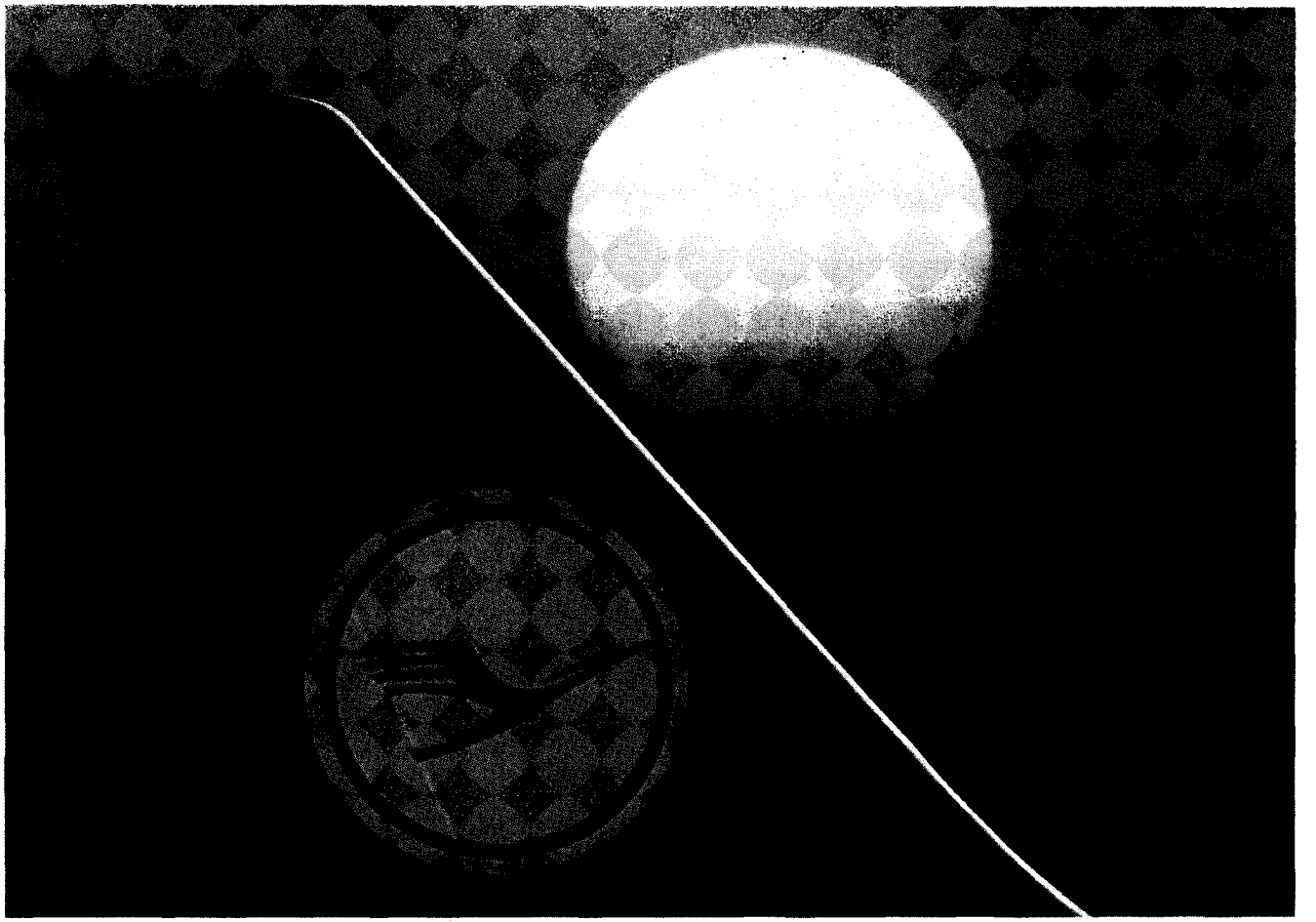

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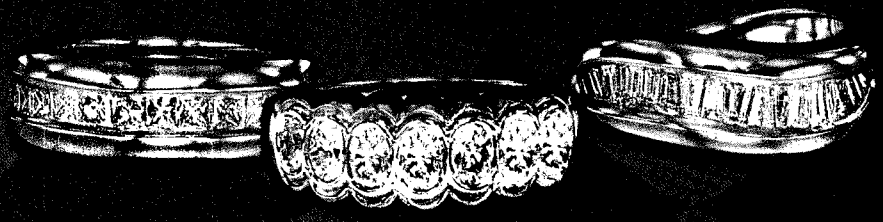

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